

HOW THE U.S. DESTROYED IRAQ

Iraq lies in shambles. More than nine years of war and devastation by the US and its imperialist allies have transformed the area of the world known as the 'Cradle of Civilization' into a raw, wounded land. From the beginning of George Bush's 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' in March 2003.

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FREE BRADLEY MANNING NOW!

On May 15th peace-loving people in Vancouver listened to the above song as they gathered at Joe's Cafe for an event about accused Wikileaks Whistleblower

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BAHRAIN: EXPOSING U.S. HYPOCRISY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

How much have you heard about the pro-democracy protests and

the brutal government repression in Bahrain? If you're drawing a blank, I'm not surprised.

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We are realists... We dream the impossible - che



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STUDENT STRIKE IN QUÉBEC: CHALLENGES & PERSPECTIVES



FREE THE CUBAN 5!

In October of 1976, Cubana air flight #455 crashed into the ocean near Barbados. Of the 73 passengers on the flight, not one survived. A bomb had exploded on the plane, a bombing admittedly planned by a man...

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Fire This Time sat down with Cecelia Point, spokesperson from the Musqueam Band, for an interview on the ongoing struggle of the Musqueam people...

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photo by Jason Payne, PNG

MERLI VANEGAS



As we have seen in his recent public appearances, the recovery of our President is moving, like our Bolivarian Revolution, "at the speed of the conquerors" as we say in Venezuela...

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GRAND CHIEF STEWART PHILLIP

As time goes on with respect to growing awareness of the desecration of the burial site at Marpole Midden in Southern Vancouver, the support has increased greatly...

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How much have you heard about the pro-democracy protests and the brutal government repression in Bahrain? If you're drawing a blank, I'm not surprised. Despite the ongoing clamour in the media about government repression in Syria, there has been a shameful silence when it comes to the situation in Bahrain.

It Started With a Word: Democracy

Protests in Bahrain began in February 2011, inspired by the heroic movements of people fighting for human rights and democracy in Egypt and Tunisia. In the first few days of protest, thousands turned out to demand democratic and social reforms such as the writing of a new constitution and better access to jobs, health care and housing. Government forces responded swiftly and harshly, immediately using tear gas, rubber bullets and sound grenades against the peaceful demonstrators. On February 15, 2011, the first protestor was killed, shot in the back by police. Martial law was declared across the country and at the government of Bahrain's request, neighbouring Saudi Arabia sent 1,200 troops (along with 800 more from the United Arab Emirates) into the country to help crush the protest movement. Two days later, 1000 police were sent to Pearl Square in the capital city of Manama to disperse 1500 protesters who were camped there. Three civilians were killed and 230 injured. The next day, protests continued as the government escalated its repression, this time with forces firing even on medics who were loading the wounded into ambulances.

Later Came With a Word Too: Resistance

In the weeks and months following, the protests and mounting government repression continued. The main opposition newspaper, Al-Wasat, was shut down by the Information Ministry, and internet and media were placed under tight control as per the rule of martial law. Severe repression continued in the streets as well. Widespread abuse, torture and human rights violations have been carried out by Bahrain's security forces, according to a report by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.

BAHRAIN: EXPOSING U.S. HYPOCRISY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



US President Obama with Bahraini King Hamad at United Nations in New York, 2011



Hilary Clinton and Bahraini Foreign Minister



Protesters were not the only victims of government repression. Doctors who treated those injured have also been targeted. In an April 2011 report entitled "Do No Harm: A Call for Bahrain to End Systematic Attacks on Doctors and Patients, Physicians for Human Rights" reported the following: "Armed security forces abducted Dr. Ali El-Ekri from the operating room while he was performing surgery at Salmaniya Hospital on 17 March. Another doctor was abducted in the middle of the night from his home in front of his wife and three children.

Police and masked men in civilian clothes stormed the home of Dr. Abdul Khaliq al-Oraibi on 1 April. The security forces dragged him out of bed, handcuffed, and then blindfolded him. They did not say where or why they were taking him. His family has not heard from him since."

In total twenty Bahraini health professionals have been convicted by a military court on various charges such as 'inciting hatred of the regime' and 'attempting to overthrow the government' and face up to 15 years in prison. Under international pressure, they have been released but are still pending a retrial by a civilian court. Dozens more were abducted or detained for providing care to wounded protesters.

Hospitals were also taken over by government forces and were used to trap and arrest wounded pro-democracy protesters, according to Médecins Sans Frontières. Furthermore, Physicians for Human Rights reported that, "government security forces systematically targeted ambulances during the weeks following the February protests because they carried wounded protesters from the rural towns and smaller medical centers to the main Salmaniya Hospital. PHR investigators received corroborating eyewitness testimonies from three health professionals and three patients that government security forces stole at least six ambulances and used them for military purposes. Further, police forcibly removed ambulance medics from the vehicles, made them remove their uniforms at gunpoint, and then posed as medics, reportedly to get closer to injured protesters to detain them."

Since the protests began, opposition groups report that at least 70 people have been killed, according to the New York Times. Thousands more have been arrested and tortured. However, the ongoing repression has only strengthened the resolve of the Bahraini people to continue their struggle for human rights and democracy, with protests in the streets continuing today.

History of the Protest Movement

The demands for democratic reform being



put forward by the people of Bahrain are nothing new. Throughout the last century, protests against the ruling al-Khalifa family and its imperialist puppet masters have frequently erupted. Although Bahrain has officially been a constitutional monarchy since 1973, in reality the elected government holds no actual power. All legislation can be vetoed by the Consultative Council, which is directly appointed by King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa. Furthermore, the unelected Prime Minister of Bahrain, Prince Khalifa bin Salaman al Khalifa (uncle to the king) has been in power since Bahrain gained its independence from Britain in 1971. This complete lack of democracy is exacerbated by the fact that the al-Khalifa family has long been a cohort of the United States, essentially allowing US interests to come before the interests of Bahrainis.

In addition to the demands for democratic reform, protesters are also calling for an end to the systematic discrimination against Bahraini Shi'a Muslims. Although they make up approximately 70% of the native Bahraini population, Shiites face discrimination on all levels from the Sunni Muslim al-Khalifa monarchy. Shiites are discriminated against in access to housing, government jobs, and public health facilities, according to an International Crisis Group report. The government has also attempted to silence the voice of Shiites by manipulating electoral districts to ensure majority Sunni representation and granting Bahraini citizenship to Sunnis from other Arab countries. However, this is not a question of "sectarian divisions" between the Shi'a and Sunni communities as the major media has attempted to portray it on the rare occasion they have covered the situation in Bahrain. On the contrary, protesters have called for Shi'a-Sunni unity, and demand simply that all Bahrainis be treated as equal citizens, regardless of religious affiliation.

Not Only Bahrain

In May 2012, about 300,000 people - nearly half of the country's citizens - gathered in Manama to protest a proposed bilateral union between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The merger would create a united military and foreign



policy between the two countries - undoubtedly a response to growing opposition to the rulers of these sheikdoms. As demonstrated by the deployment of Saudi and UAE troops to Bahrain, these rulers are shaking in their boots at the thought of unrest spreading from Bahrain to their own countries. This bilateral union would allow Saudi troops to enter Bahrain at any time to put an end to protests there. However, for the time being this plan will not go forward due, in large part, to the massive opposition to this plan by the people of Bahrain.

The United States' Hypocrisy! Is This New?

"Democracy isn't only for those countries the United States has a problem with"

- Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights

While the United States and many other Western governments have been championing the cause of human rights and democracy in Syria and Libya, they have remained shamefully silent on the grave human rights situation in Bahrain.

Last week, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lashed out against the Syrian government in the State Department's annual human rights report, saying "the Assad regime's brutality against its own people must and will end, because Syrians know they deserve a better future." This statement came just a few weeks after Clinton hosted Bahrain's Crown Prince, Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, in Washington. Clinton wrapped up that visit by noting that "Bahrain is a partner, and a very important one, to the United States. We are supportive of the national dialogue and the kinds of important work that the Crown Prince has been doing in his nation."

The United States is providing not only political but also military support to the al-Khalifa regime. On May 11, the Obama administration announced that they would resume the sale of \$53 million worth of arms to Bahrain's government, despite the current situation there. The US Department of State notes on their website that "US military sales to Bahrain since 2000 total \$1.4 billion... the [Bahrain Defense Force] also sends personnel



to the United States for military training." Therefore, it is not only with the complicity but also the material assistance of the United States that the al-Khalifa regime has carried out their crackdown on Bahrainis.

And The Struggle Is Continued

So, why the double standard when it comes to Bahrain? If the US is providing political and material support to the opposition in Syria, why are they not providing the same to the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain? The answer lies in the importance of Bahrain - and its current administration - to the United States. Geographically and politically, Bahrain is of crucial importance to United States interests in the Persian Gulf. The island nation is host to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet - a base which holds 4,000 personnel, the largest US naval base outside of its own borders. Morgan Roach of the Heritage Foundation, one of Washington's major right-wing think tanks, describes Bahrain as "one of Washington's staunchest allies" and "a bulwark to containing Iran and ensuring that oil can flow through the Straits of Hormuz unimpeded." Therefore, it is essential to the US government that their ally, the al-Khalifa regime, remains in power. An independent, democratic government in Bahrain, which would serve the interest of the people rather than cooperating with US imperialism, is not what the US wants.

The hypocritical position of the US administration towards the opposition movement in Bahrain fundamentally exposes that the US has no interest whatsoever in promoting human rights or democracy in the Middle East. The side which they choose to aid in any given conflict is calculated purely on its ability to promote the interests of US capitalism and imperialism in the region. We should not be deceived by their crocodile tears over human rights in Syria and Libya while they are supporting their brutal and anti-democratic allies in Bahrain. The internal struggles and disagreements of any country must be left up to the people of that country to decide, without the meddling of the United States or any other country.

“I think they, will take notice now...”

An interview with Cecelia Point from the Musqueam Nation



May 31, 2012. Protest to defend Musqueam territory.

By Janine Solanki,
with Julia Frohn-Nielsen

Fire This Time sat down with Cecelia Point, spokesperson from the Musqueam Band, for an interview on the ongoing struggle of the Musqueam people over *čəsna?əm* (commonly known as Marpole Midden). The Musqueam are working to halt the construction of a 5-story residential and commercial project on *čəsna?əm*, a 4,000 year old ancient Musqueam burial site. For more information and analysis on this struggle, please refer to “*čəsna?əm: Musqueam Nation Stands up for Ancient Village*” in Fire This Time Volume 7 Issue 2, online at <http://firethistime.net/FTTV7N2web.html>

The Musqueam are maintaining a 24 hour vigil at the burial site, at 1300-block South-West Marine Drive in Vancouver. Supporters are welcome to visit.

Fire This Time: Thank you, Cecelia, for taking the time to speak with us. This interview is a great opportunity for Fire This Time newspaper, as FTT is very much a supporter of the Musqueam people's struggle.

First of all, can you tell us about the importance of this site to the Musqueam people?

Cecelia Point: Well, it is designated as a national historic site, because of the artifacts

and the history here. It is a buried village that has been in our oral history for years. My great grand-father used to live in this area and has told me forever about this site and the people that live here. We have a legend of a man named Copper Man who was buried with a copper mask and that's about 4,000 years old as it turns out. So it's been handed down through our oral history, so it's a rich history. But also just the fact that our relatives are indeed buried here, so we want to protect them; you know we protect our ancestors; we want them to return to the earth and stay in their final resting place. We don't want them to be moved or chopped up or – you know, it's important to us.

FTT: What are the demands of the Musqueam now in the struggle?

Point: Well, we want the developer to stop developing this land and to get off of it, basically, and the quickest way we knew how to make that happen was to offer them land in exchange. The province [the B.C. Provincial Government] has said that they would either give us this piece of land that they have for us in Delta, or cash, in exchange for this burial site.

FTT: What actions have the Musqueam taken to protect this site?

Well initially, in March of this year we physically blockaded the site, which got the

developers attention because he could not get on there to do his work and his workers could not get on this site. So after three days of us locking them out, they came to the bargaining table. After that we had a cooling off period for three weeks and they came back because they got tired of waiting. The last party we were waiting for was the province, to get approvals for the deal we had all struck. So the province did not do their approval, and the developer went back to work.

Because he went back and unearthed two infants, our elders instructed us to get down here right away, so we did, and we are not blockading it now, but we are keeping a 24 hour vigil. So we are always here watching, and on the day that he did try to get back to work on his own, the owner of the property got on a bulldozer and started digging in the earth right near where the infants are lying; I can't say buried because they aren't buried anymore. And so we all physically went on the site. The police came and our Chief Ernie Campbell came down and basically said to him 'you really need to stop digging in that dirt because I won't be able to keep these people off the site.' So I guess he knows that if he does any invasive action we'll go on. He hasn't really been back since then and neither have any of the workers.

The government still didn't come back to the table after almost a month. So we took action by going to the Vancouver Cemetery, and put up a mock development sign to make it look like we were going to dig there, to make politicians know what it would feel like to have someone suggest they're going to dig up your ancestors and build condos on this lovely site right here. Or move the bodies or discard them, which has happened to us in the past as well. So I mean we took some pictures – we didn't get a lot of media attention.

We also went to the Premier's office that day, just to deliver some information and the lady who answered the door – whoever she was – said we were not allowed to come in, and she said you need a letter or some kind of permission to come to the Premier's office. That just upset our people so they all just marched onto the street and blockaded the road in front of the Premier's office for a couple of hours, creating a little bit of traffic chaos – it's not a very busy place.

Then from there we went to Robson Square in Vancouver, with the intent of just handing out information and getting the word out, but our community was still pretty upset, so they just took it upon themselves to start drumming and singing. They formed a drum circle in the middle of the street and blocked Robson Street for a couple of hours. We sort of thought we would get some attention from the government after all of those actions, but we got none. We got very little media attention and in fact it even got worse with the government, because they pulled the facilitator who they had sent to speak with our Chief and Council. So we were left with nothing!

The final action we took was – you know not that any of us were comfortable with it – but we blockaded the Arthur Laing Bridge, and stopped traffic from going to the airport and commuters from going downtown for almost three hours yesterday. And that garnered a lot of attention. I would have to say when that happened I'm pretty sure that Minister Polak took over the file while we were on the bridge.

FTT: Since the last action of blockading the bridge, has there been any response at all from the BC Liberal Government and what's the status of trying to discuss with them?

Point: Right, well only what we've heard in the media, because they still have not contacted our administration directly. In the media prior to yesterday, Minister Polak, who is the Minister of Aboriginal Relations, kept saying that this was not her department's file, that this file belonged to the Minister of Lands and Forests, and they were the ones that issued the archeological permits. So I'm not really sure how one government department can blame another government department and not even back

each other up.

There is a third government department which is the Ministry of Transportation, so they are the ones who are holding this piece of land for us, so the three departments need to work together, which I understand is complicated! But, you know instead they're all kind of pointing fingers at each other and from there the Ministry even pointed the finger at the city saying, well the city is the one who is ultimately going to allow development there.

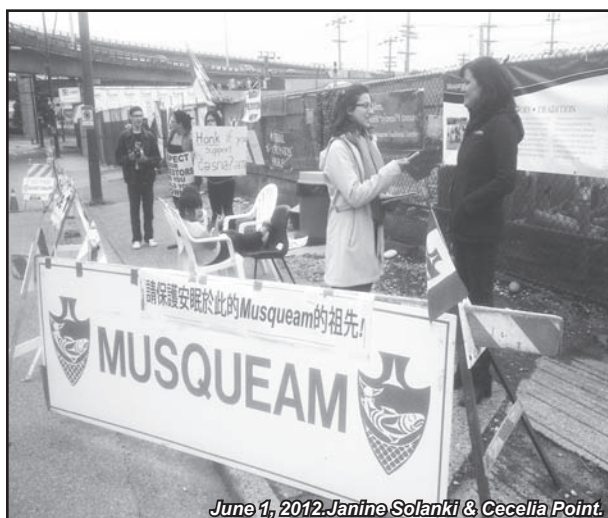
You know maybe they are, but the province is the one who is ultimately allowing them to unearth our bodies. So we'd like that to stop first. Personally I'm not really clear who is going to be blamed in the end, you know, because as you can see there is so much involved. But yesterday was the very first time that the Minister of Aboriginal Relations did indeed say that her department would be responsible – for something.

FTT: This is an issue that many Indigenous people have supported. What is the best way that non-Indigenous people can support you in this struggle to defend the site?

Point: They can speak to their government as well. Because I think this issue here, being right in the middle of a major city, is getting a lot of attention, more than what happens all over the province; there are First Nations burial sites desecrated all over the province. But they are done in isolation in little towns with little reserves where the two never really meet each other and might not even talk to each other.

So if something on a tiny reserve with a hundred people, you know, is damaged, nobody in BC every really hears about it, never mind in Canada. So the public hasn't really stood up and taken notice, but I think they will take notice now.

What we want people to do is to write to their politicians and tell them to stop desecrating



June 1, 2012 Janine Solanki & Cecelia Point.

our gravesites, and in this particular case we want them to write to the Minister of Lands and tell them to rescind these development permits. Finally, if none of that works, we want people to say: well will you at least accept our land swap, like immediately, and get off the property?!

FTT: Thank you very much for your interview.

Cecelia Point: Thank you.

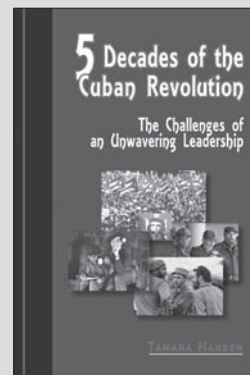


Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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Leonard Peltier supporters march on Washington State Capital!

By Aaron Mercredi

Innocence has a single voice that can only say over and over again, "I didn't do it." Guilt has a thousand voices, all of them lies.
- Leonard Peltier, Prison Writings

On May 18th, over a hundred supporters of Leonard Peltier marched on to the state capital building in Olympia, Washington to demand his release. A combined effort from Media Island, the Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee (LPDOC), the office of the Northwest regional organizer, LPDOC, Tacoma and Portland chapters of LPDOC and members of the Olympia activist community, the action was also in support of the Leonard Peltier Human Rights March, which was making its way across the United States to Washington, DC to free an innocent man.

Leonard Peltier is an Indigenous activist who is serving two consecutive life sentences for the deaths of two FBI agents who were killed in a firefight on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota in 1975. A member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), he was framed up and extradited from Canada under false evidence and his trial was an ugly display of government misconduct. Having served more than 37 years in prison so far, Leonard takes the title as the longest-serving political prisoner in the United States. His real crime was standing up against the US government for Indigenous people. Today, he is a symbol of US injustice, but also Native pride and unwavering courage. Leonard is recognized throughout the world for



May 18, 2012. Supporters march through downtown Olympia for Leonard Peltier.

his life-long struggle for human rights. Among his many international human rights awards, in 2009, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for the sixth consecutive year.

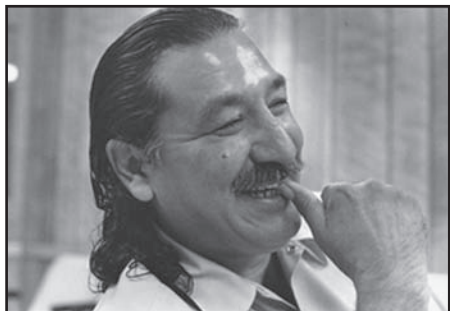
The march began at Olympia's Heritage Park with traditional drumming and speeches by local solidarity activists as well as organizers of the different Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee branches active in the US Northwest. Then, everyone marched through downtown Olympia, and to the chants of "Free Free Leonard Peltier", the marchers arrived on the steps of the Washington State capital building. The action wrapped up with a closing rally that included updates on Leonard's case and the critical need to support Leonard's fight for freedom.

The main organizing body of Leonard's defense is the Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee, and they are taking a four-step approach to Leonard's freedom:

1. Demand an award of executive clemency
2. Demand a congressional investigation into the FBI's misconduct in Indian Country, against the American Indian Movement and in the case of Leonard Peltier
3. Demand an Executive Review by the Attorney General
4. Demand the release of tens of thousands of related case documents.

For more information and background on Leonard's case, please visit the Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee website at

www.whoisleonardpeltier.info



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If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to "Nita Palmer".

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STUDENT STRIKE IN QUÉBEC CHALLENGES DECAYING CAPITALIST SYSTEM

WHAT LESSONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THEIR STRUGGLE?



By Azza Rojbi, Michael Larson
and Noah Fine

(Students from Capilano University, British Columbia Institute of Technology, and Douglas College)

The 100-day mark of the Québec student strike, the longest student strike in the history of Canada, recently passed on Saturday May 22, 2012. To mark the occasion, estimates of up to half a million people came from all over Québec to the streets of Montreal. The demand of the participants remained the same: No Tuition Hike! However

the composition of the protest had greatly changed. In response to the recent passing of emergency Bill 78, a move by the Charest Liberal government to illegalize the strike, everyone from families with children to senior citizens came to the streets banging pots and pans, chanting and demonstrating their solidarity with the student strike movement.

"This isn't a student strike, it's a society waking up," read one of the lead banners in the march. So it appears, as of now, the Charest governments' attempts to quash the protest have failed. They have only served to facilitate the entry of a larger section of Québec and Canada's population into the mix.

The student strike movement, which began in February 2012, came together in order to protest austerity measures proposed by the Québec Liberal government of Jean Charest. The government was hoping to fill its budget shortfalls by burdening students to cover the costs of financial mismanagement by

the Charest government. So, they proposed raising tuition fees 75% over the next 7 years. Students didn't accept the budget, and leading up to, during and since its passing, Québec students have waged a dignified battle for their right to education.

Bill 78: Legislation or Declaration of War?

"What a mess! What a terrible mess!" stated Pauline Marois leader of the Parti Québécois to the Legislature speaking against Bill 78. "This is where the premier, the leader of the Liberal party, has led Québec. We are debating a special law against our children, against our youth."

So what is inside the bill? Bill 78, sarcastically titled "An Act to enable students to receive instruction from the postsecondary institutions they attend" seeks to limit and illegalize students' ability to protest. Within the Crackdown Bill, any gatherings of 50 or more people will have to be authorized by the police. Also the "date, time, duration and venue of the demonstration as well as its route, if applicable; and the means of transportation to be used for those

and between \$25,000-\$125,000 for student organizations. With fines like the ones the Charest government is planning to lay against protesters, they may be able to bail themselves out and implement the tuition freeze students are fighting for!

"Bill 78 is an affront to basic freedoms that goes far beyond what is permissible under provincial, national or international human rights laws," stated Javier Zúñiga, Special Advisor at Amnesty International, which has taken issue with the Bill. "It is unreasonable and unacceptable to require citizens to apply to the authorities in advance any time they wish to exercise a basic human right. Québec's National Assembly should rescind this restrictive law immediately," Zúñiga continued.

Students are not alone in their protest against Bill 78. Denis Barrette, one of the 700 lawyers who protested against the Bill on May 28 in Montreal stated, "There are so many vaguely worded parts to this law... It gives an incredible amount of discretionary power to police. It also makes the education minister judge and jury when it comes to deciding if student groups are legal."

In response to the passing of the Bill, the May 22 protest, illegal under the Bill's provisions, became the largest act of civil disobedience in Canada's history with hundreds of thousands of

"We are assisting in a historical confrontation between the government and young people."

"Now, with the introduction of Bill 78, we find it even more important to participate in the protests."

purposes," must be provided to police eight hours in advance of the activity.

The legislation also approved leveling fines against individuals and organizations found to have broken the law. Between \$1,000-\$5,000 could be fined to an individual, between \$7,000-\$35,000 for a student leader

people breaking the law.

So far, more than 2,500 protest participants have been arrested by the police, which has sparked condemnations, including from the United Nations. The government of Québec now has less than 60 days in order to respond to a UN report condemning the violence and

explaining their reasons for the use of brutal and excessive force against protesters.

Charest Government Breaks off Negotiations... Again!

On Thursday, June 4, after 4 days of talks between the Charest Liberal government of Québec and the four Québec student associations representing the striking students, Education Minister, Michelle Courchesne, broke off the second round of negotiations.

"For them it was the freeze, the moratorium or nothing", stated Courchesne after the failed ne-

gotiations. Within the negotiations the government had offered the students to cut the hike from \$254 per year to \$219 per year. In the end of that proposed 'deal' students would be expected to pay \$1,533 at the end of a seven-year period against the original \$1,625 tuition fee hike over a 5-year period. The four student groups flatly rejected. The government returned shamefully again with an offer reducing the first year payment increase to \$100 with the formerly proposed \$254 increase in the following 6 years.

"The offer we got - and this isn't a joke - is a tuition hike of \$1,624. It's a bit insulting," stated Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, spokesperson of the Coalition large de l'association pour une solidarité syndicale (CLASSE) at a press conference after the negotiations.

Again thousands of students and their supporters took to the streets long into the night opposing the Québec governments 'deal' and reaffirming their commitment to fight against any increase in tuition fees.

Education or Grand Prix: Are we on the right track?

Since the negotiations collapsed, there has been no shortage of government spokespersons and mainstream media attempts to create fear amongst people in Québec and Canada about the continuation of the strike, which Québec Premier Jean Charest has

called a "threat to all Québécois."

With headlines filled with plenty of stories about business owners in Montreal claiming a loss, such as the Toronto Sun's "Montreal tourism fears summer chill from Québec student strike", the Québec government and major Canadian media sources are trying to frame the rich as the victim and the people struggling for accessible education as the executioner.

"It's not a student strike; it's society waking up."

here, and so they understand why they see images of protests on television every day," said Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, before tens of thousands took to the streets on Saturday June 2 in a rainy but energetic protest. What a threat eh?! Students are going to intimidate tourists with information about the strike!

Martine Desjardins, president of the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) told the CBC, "It was towards the end of negotiations [with the government] that they tried to make people believe we wanted to disrupt the festivals this summer."

As a consequence of the governments' campaign the opening celebration of the Grand Prix Formula 1 car race in Montreal has been cancelled, claiming threats by the students

"Education is the base of any society; above all, it fosters the development of critical thought."

to disrupt it. It is clear what the Québec government is trying to portray: if you want a fun filled summer don't support the student strike!

However the student strike movement has committed itself to continue peaceful action over the summer months and many more layers of Québec and Canada's society is helping to fill the streets.

Viva the Street! We Must Defend & Extend the Québec Student Strike!

Although the Québec student strike has gained incredible amounts of support Canada wide and internationally, there is still a certain lack of solidarity from places which Québec students should be able to rely on. The official opposition, the New Democratic

Party (NDP) has sat idly by as the movement has grown. Other student organizations and unions across Canada have been lacking in support as well. It is true that many have sent and are continuing to send financial donations to help with legal costs incurred by the strikers, but what is needed in Canada and internationally is a movement of solidarity that, like the Québec strike, can defend our dignity as students and oppressed people.

While Québec students have been able to fend off increases to the cost of education time and time again, the rest of Canada has seen decades of continued hikes.

According to the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), "At the beginning of the 1990s, average undergraduate tuition fees in Canada were \$1,464. Today, these fees have risen more than three-fold to \$5,138." Startling figures considering that Québec students are currently fighting to maintain a cost, which is less than the Canadian average in the early 1990s!

Québec students are marching a dignified path in defense of their right to an accessible education. If we in the rest of Canada are paying in some provinces, over 3 times more, where is our fight?

The key to defending the Québec student strike, outside of Québec, lies within our own struggle in each province of Canada, in the U.S. and around the world.

In 2008 the Prime Minister Harper Conservative Government released the "Canada First Defense Strategy" which had included a

20-year program for military upgrades. The upgrades will end up costing taxpayers in Canada \$490 billion. This is in addition to the more than \$22 billion spent on the war against the people of Afghanistan and the \$150 million spent on bombing the people of Libya which claimed the lives of at least 30,000 people.

We need to demand a 'Canada Education First Strategy'! With the government of Canada spending billions upon billions on war, it becomes clear why education is not their priority.

Our priority as students, working and oppressed people in Canada is education, jobs healthcare and a dignified life.

MONEY FOR EDUCATION, NOT FOR WAR!

ABOLISH BILL 78!

**FREEZE TUITION FEES IN QUÉBEC!
FREE AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION
FOR ALL!**



ALAN GROSS AND THE FREE PRESS



By Saul Landau*

Less than 3 years ago, Cuban authorities arrested Alan Gross, who had an almost \$600,000 contract with DIA, Inc., to carry out a USAID program in Cuba.

At his Havana trial, Gross heard Cuban authorities present his trip reports in which he revealed how he supplied a pre-selected group of mostly Jewish Cubans with sophisticated and illegal technology.

Gross smuggled the parts into Cuba "piece by piece, in backpacks and carry-on bags." These included "laptops, smartphones, hard drives and networking equipment," wrote Desmond Butler. "The most sensitive item, according to official trip reports, was... a specialized mobile phone chip that experts say is often used by the Pentagon and the CIA to make satellite signals virtually impossible to track." (Associated Press, February 13, 2012)

With Gross' sophisticated SIM card the group could also defuse signal tracking. His secrecy was not intended to keep Cuban officials from learning Jewish matzo ball recipes.

The U.S. Agency for International Development funded the operation as part of its "democracy promotion" plan "to provide economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of U.S. foreign policy goals. Gross, however, identified himself as a member of a Jewish humanitarian group, not a representative of the U.S. government." (Butler)

On May 11, 2012, some three months after

Butler's article appeared, State Department Press Briefing officer Victoria Nuland fielded a question.

"Yesterday, Josefina Vidal, a Cuban official ...said that they've conveyed some kind of offer to the U.S. Government on the release of Alan Gross. Is there any possibility at all of negotiation on that front?"



NULAND: "Go back to an interview Secretary Clinton gave to CNN.... There is no equivalence between ...convicted spies – [in the 1990s, Cuban agents infiltrated exile terrorist groups in Miami to stop their terrorism in Cuba. The agents fed their information

via Havana to the FBI who after years of using their data arrested them. In 2001, a jury convicted and a judge sentenced them to draconian terms] – in the United States, and... an assistance worker who should never have been locked up in the first place."

Did she not read Butler's piece?

"So we are not contemplating any release of the Cuban Five, and we are not contemplating any trade. The continuing imprisonment of Alan Gross is deplorable, it is wrong, and it's an affront to human decency. And the Cuban Government needs to do the right thing."

QUESTION: "Why is it okay to talk about trading with the Taliban but not with the Cubans for a U.S. person that's been in jail and is in poor health?"

MS. NULAND: "There's no equivalence in these situations, and the Cuban Government knows that. This is a matter of a sitting government [the Taliban governed Afghanistan before U.S. troops invaded in 2001] having locked up an assistance worker on no basis whatsoever. ...I mean, our view is he did nothing wrong."

Ignoring facts in Butler's AP story the State Department insists Gross "was distributing laptops and standard computer equipment to help the Jewish community access the Internet."

In fact, however, as La Alborada reported, Gross was establishing an infrastructure for an encrypted satellite-communications system to spread unrest in Cuba and permit U.S. supervisors to build democracy. "Gross



as its expert operator, was only a cover-up based on Gross' being Jewish and an active supporter, in the U.S., of B'nai B'rith, presentable as a kind of Jewish Santa Claus for Internet-deprived Cubans of his religion."

Cuba did not arrest Gross for "trying to help fellow Jews share religious and cultural information; he is in jail for being an agent of a foreign country in a program intended to destabilize ...the government of Cuba." (La Alborada – May 14)

Why do we have a press if government officials don't read or refer to it? Even reporters ignore it. Wolf Blitzer either faked ignorance or was uninformed when he interviewed Hilary Clinton and Alan Gross.

But Desmond Butler read Gross' trip reports as did "USAID officials received regular briefings on his progress, according to DAI spokesman Steven O'Connor."

Butler shows how in order "to avoid airport scrutiny, Gross enlisted the help of other American Jews to bring in electronic equipment a piece at a time. He instructed his helpers to pack items, some of them banned in Cuba, in carry-on luggage, not checked bags." (Butler)

In her May 11 press briefing Nuland "categorically reject the charges against him, and the fact that he's been locked up ...with no cause." She also forgot to read, Judy Gross' (Alan Gross') wife – statement to a TV reporter. "We know now that he did break Cuban law. He did not know that until he got to Cuba and was arrested. (WJZ, CBS Baltimore, May 9, 2012, interview with Vic Carter)

Dear Judy,

Please send a copy of your interview to Secretary of State Clinton, President Obama and their press officers. Then, in front of the White House and State Department, hold up the key "Alan-did-break-Cuban-law" sentence on the off chance someone might notice. Lots of luck.

Saul.

Taken from:

<http://saullandau.wordpress.com>

**Saul Landau, Saul is Professor Emeritus at California State University, Pomona, and a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies at the Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. He has produced more than 40 films on social, political and historical issues, and worldwide human rights, throughout his career. Throughout his career, he has been the recipient of the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award, the George Polk Award for Investigative Reporting, and the First Amendment Award, as well as an Emmy for "Paul Jacobs and the Nuclear Gang." Professor Landau's most recent film, 'Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up?' was screened at this year's Vancouver International Film Festival.*

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Battle of Ideas Press

CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM - WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.

"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

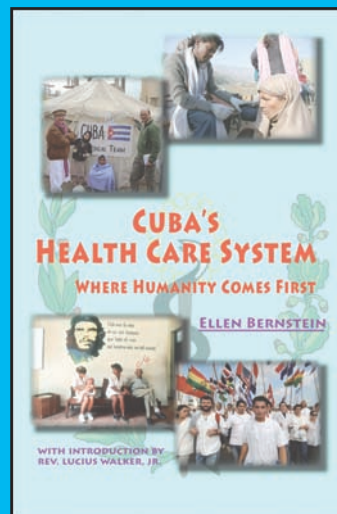
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CHANGES TO EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE: A CLEAR ATTACK ON WORKING PEOPLE AND IMMIGRANTS

EVEN THEIR OWN CAPITALISTS SAY IT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE!

By Thomas Davies

In 2008, in a disappearing act which would have impressed even the Great Houdini himself, the government of Canada waved its magic pen and vanished a \$58 billion surplus in the Employment Insurance (EI) program. One minute it was accounted for, and the next it had disappeared within something called a "Consolidated Revenue Fund" which had nothing to do with funding EI.

In 2012, the government is once again performing spectacular magic tricks - putting forward a gigantic 425 page omnibus bill and acting as though it is a simple, efficient way of addressing important issues like labour shortages "for Canada and Canadians". The huge bill is like the magician's hat from which an incredible amount of surprises appear, only the joke will be on us if we don't expose and oppose the bill and its attacks on poor and working people.

Smoke and Mirrors

The "Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act" actually contains 70 Bills, the ones which target EI claimants divide them into three separate categories depending on their claims history: "Long tenured workers", "Frequent claimants", and "Occasional claimants". "Long tenured workers" have 18 weeks to find a job before being forced to accept a "similar" job at 80% of their previous wages. "Occasional claimants" can hold out for employment at 90% of their former salary in the same occupation for six weeks. After that, they will have to accept a job in a similar occupation at 80% salary for another 12 weeks. After 18 weeks, they will have to accept any job offered at 70% of their former salary. "Frequent claimants" must take a job offered at 80% of their former salary in a similar occupation in the first six weeks. After that, they must take any job offered at 70% of their former salary.

Sound confusing? It's supposed to be. The worst part is that Bill C-38 proposes giving minister the power to decide criteria for defining what constitutes "suitable

employment" and what constitutes "reasonable efforts" to find a job.

When asked to define "suitable employment" and "reasonable efforts", Human Resources Minister Diane Finley has so far refused, saying, "We haven't announced those details yet. We want to make sure the legislation gets through first." However, based on the statement of Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty that, "There is no bad job, the only bad job is not having a job," working people can expect to be forced to take a lesser and lesser paying jobs regardless of their education and experience or their seniority.

Big Myths

A big myth which is being promoted is that the main problem is an army of lazy Canadian workers who are taking advantage of the rest of us and abusing the EI system. This is fundamentally wrong. It is the Canadian government and employers who are taking huge advantage of workers, and are now trying to get us to work for even less wages.

Is it really "lazy" seasonal workers and the unemployed who are to blame when according to Statistics Canada there is a ratio of 6 unemployed to every job in Canada? The number more than doubles in parts of Atlantic Canada where the government is trying to blame seasonal workers for coasting on EI. According to their own statistics there are 15.4 unemployed workers in Newfoundland to every job! Basically means there are enough workers and they are demanding work, but government and capitalist class unable to offer work!

Workers are being forced into increasingly unstable, low paying part-time jobs. According to the Canadian Labour Congress, Canada has lost 500,000 well paying manufacturing jobs since 2003. The Mowat Center think-tank also reported that since

1976, the number of multiple jobholders has increased by 150% and the number of part-time jobholders has increased by 55 %.

The Mowatt Center concluded that, "Low income workers pay disproportionately for the [EI] program, yet many have little or no chance of collecting any benefits should they find themselves unemployed." That is because only 40% of Canada's more than 1.4 million unemployed actually receive EI, even though we all pay into it while working.

The Pieces Fit Together

The changes to EI make more sense if you look at recent decisions by the Canadian Government and how they affect working people. Bill C-38 also raises the age to receive an Old Age and Security Pension from 65 to 67, which is no small matter for millions of aging workers. Also buried in Bill C-38 is the repeal of the "The Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act", which ensures that workers on government construction jobs must be paid the prevalent wage in their province, and overtime. A contractor will now be allowed to bid for a job using minimum wages - forcing all other contractors to slash their wages as well.

The federal government has also intervened directly in strikes five times in the past year, most recently legislating CP rail workers back to work who were trying to protect their pensions from a company which posted





profits of \$570 million in the last year alone. This itself should put to rest any doubt that the government is working hand in hand with employers who do not feel obligated to ensure fair labour standards.

Divide and Rule

Bill C-38 also moves from another angle in its fight to push down wages. Changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Act will allow employers to pay higher skilled migrant workers 15% less than prevailing wage rates, and employers are also able to accelerate application for temporary foreign workers, reducing the time from the current 12 to 14 weeks to 10 days. In another shocking move, the government will also erase all Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) applications prior to February 2008, jeopardizing the lives of over 300,000 people.

There are more than 300,000 Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada, triple the number from a decade ago. They work everywhere. They pay into EI but do not receive it, have practically no right to apply for permanent residency or citizenship in Canada, and are taken advantage of in every area from pay, working conditions, living conditions, and overall rights. In 2010, government documents showed 74 per cent of Alberta businesses hiring temporary foreign workers that were subject to inspection had violated the labour code. These terrible conditions continue, and the government's new promises of beefed up inspection practices are unconvincing at best.

It is not a question of foreign workers taking "Canadian jobs", but of government and employers taking advantage of desperate

workers in other countries and using these programs to push down wages and working conditions for everybody. Foreign workers also become easy scapegoats for the government and employers, the ones who are actually responsible for driving wages down.

The Bottom Line is that the Bottom Line is Being Driven Down

Every change, from the new EI regulations to those regarding Temporary Foreign Workers, is part of an overall effort to force workers in Canada to settle for less and less and less. They are part of a huge vice being tightened down further and further as the Canadian government and employers try to force the losses from their Economic Crisis onto our backs. The message is, 'we will either force you to accept this misery, or we'll find someone who will.'

All statistics aside, if the government is forecasting huge labour shortages, why not improve access to EI and improve the system with training programs to meet those needs? That \$58 billion which they disappeared would have likely been able to cover all of it. If the government says they are short on money, why did they cut corporate taxes to 15% from the 28% they were a decade ago?

The twisted magic show of the government of Canada continues as they are trying to put our rights and livelihoods into a wooden box and saw them apart. Only this is real life and they have no plan of putting them back together at the end. Québec students have given us a clear reminder of how to mobilize and effectively defend our rights, and all poor and working people, regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality or work need to be united in opposing Bill C-31 and all attacks on poor and working people.

Scrap Bill C-38!

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!

Education not Austerity!



People all over the World Say...

FREE THE CUBAN 5 NOW!

5th of the Month for the Cuban 5! Monthly Protest Action

*Our solidarity multiplies like leaves in springtime.
You will deliver us victory.
You will be with us on the great day of our return.
- Part of a poem by Cuban 5 Hero, Antonio Guerrero*

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www.free-the-5-vancouver.ca

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FREE THE CUBAN 5 NOW!

Report Back from 79th Vancouver Picket Action

By Noah Fine

In October of 1976, Cubana air flight #455 crashed into the ocean near Barbados. Of the 73 passengers on the flight, not one survived. A bomb had exploded on the plane, a bombing admittedly planned by a man who today walks free on the streets of Miami, Florida.

Luis Posada Carriles, a former FBI agent, has worked for years on and off the U.S. government's payroll with the explicit direction of organizing terrorism against the people of Cuba. The case of Carriles' terrorism however is not an isolated incident. In the last 50 years anti-Cuba terrorists have killed almost 3,500 people.

After dozens of attempts by the Cubans to have the U.S. government intervene in their homegrown terrorist activity, to no avail, the Cuban government sent 5 unarmed, peaceful agents to Miami to infiltrate and collect information on the terrorist groups.

Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and

René González, known around the world as the 5 Cuban Heroes, collected countless important documents and proof of acts of terror against their country. They handed over their investigation to the U.S. government. However, the U.S. government did not act to stop the terrorists. Instead they moved swiftly to imprison the 5 innocent men who uncovered the truth.

An international campaign has since emerged to demand the immediate freedom of the 5 Cuban Heroes.

On Tuesday May 5, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver organized their 79th monthly protest action in front of the U.S. Consulate. Included in the list of speakers were, Nestor Otero, an organizer with the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver who had recently returned from the "5 Days for the Cuban 5" campaign in Washington DC. Other speakers included veteran of the Civil Rights movement, David Whittlesey, and Alison Bodine the co-chair of Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO). A



moving letter of support was read from Raul Cardoso the head of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) in Sancti Spiritus, Cuba

The Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver organizes a protest action for the Cuban 5 on the 5th of every month. The 5th of the month for the Cuban 5 is an international campaign where many of the 300 Cuban 5 committees around the world organize activities in unison.

The Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver would like to encourage you to get involved in Vancouver or wherever you live in the campaign to immediately free the Cuban 5.

For more information, please visit:
www.freethe5vancouver.ca

Join the 20th anniversary Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba!

By Alison Bodine

July 1st - July 31st 2012

This summer for the 23rd time, the Pastors for Peace Friendshipment Caravan to Cuba will challenge the United States' economic and travel blockade on Cuba, that has been imposed by the U.S. government on the Cuban people for over 50 years. The Caravan will travel through up to 140 cities in the U.S. and Canada, raising awareness about the U.S. blockade and gathering humanitarian aid to take to Cuba.

After two weeks of traveling through the U.S. there is a blockade-busting border crossing into Mexico when participants directly break U.S. law in an act of civil disobedience by taking humanitarian aid that is destined for Cuba across the border into Mexico. Participants will then travel through Mexico and depart for nine days in Cuba, participating in a variety of educational and cultural events.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Pastors for Peace Caravans to Cuba. Over the past 20 years thousands of participants and over 30,000 tons of humanitarian aid have been brought to Cuba, building a 'people-to-people' foreign policy based on mutual respect, solidarity and friendship between the people of the U.S. and Cuba.

This Caravan will also commemorate Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr., the founding director of Pastors for Peace, who passed away peacefully in September 2010.

The Caravan is a rare way to experience Cuba. You will have a chance to exchange and share with the people of Cuba in an intimate and profound way. Now is the time to secure your spot on the bus!



BC Aid Network for Cuba

By Alison Bodine

How can you get involved in the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba in British Columbia?

Here in British Columbia, Canada, the BC Aid Network for Cuba (BCANC) will once again be collecting humanitarian aid to send on the Pastors for Peace Caravan and encouraging people in BC and Canada to do all that they can to support this important project. We are looking for assistance from all peace and social justice minded people in BC to join us in making the 23rd Caravan to Cuba a great success!

Despite growing world-wide opposition to the U.S. blockade, this cruel policy still remains in full effect. As people in BC and Canada we must join in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the U.S.

Here are 4 exciting ways you can get involved:

1. Collect aid from across British Columbia to send to Cuba.
2. Collect financial donations, especially fundraising, across BC to help pay the cost of getting the aid all the way from BC to Cuba.
3. Help BCANC to encourage people to travel with the Caravan through the US and Mexico to Cuba.
4. Attend and support one of the BC Caravan stops! The Caravan will be visiting Comox Valley, Nanaimo, Victoria, Salt Spring Island, Vancouver and crossing the border at Peace Arch Park in White Rock. These are public events, and we encourage you to attend! Find the event information on BCANC website below!

For more information and to get involved with BCANC: www.bcanc.net

Musqueam Nation Takes Action: Activities & Actions Will Continue

An Interview with Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

By Aaron Mercredi

On May 30th, traffic came to a standstill over the Arthur Laing Bridge as members of the Musqueam Nation and their supporters took to its decks for a protest during the heavy morning commute. The North end of the bridge, which connects South Vancouver to Richmond, sits right above an ancient Musqueam burial site and village called 'c̓əsnaʔəm', also known as the Marpole Midden, which the Musqueam have been fighting to protect from developers and the BC Liberal government. The protest, which was announced the evening before in order to alert commuters of the bridge closure, sent a strong message to the BC Liberals that the Musqueam are not going to sit back and watch their sacred site be desecrated, no matter how much the government tries to stall the issue.

As I wrote in the article 'c̓əsnaʔəm: Musqueam Nation Stands Up For Ancient Village' which appeared in Volume 7, Issue 2 of Fire This Time (<http://firethistime.net/FTTV7N2web.html>), the Musqueam had proposed a land swap with the developer, at no cost to taxpayers, and planned to turn the site in to an interpretive educational park recognizing the rich Musqueam history and the ancient village that dates back to the time of the Egyptian pyramids. However, this needed approval from the BC government, and while the developer agreed to the swap, they stated that they would continue with the excavation and construction if this deal was not imminently reached. As the BC legislature was going into its summer break and the BC Liberal government showed no sign of coming to the table, the Musqueam increased the pressure on the government to act.

On May 29, the Musqueam organized a day of action. Along with supporters, they began by taking to the streets outside the Mountain View cemetery in Vancouver to show that the public should be just as outraged by desecration of this ancient burial ground as they would if it concerned their own ancestors in the city cemetery. The Musqueam then took their protest to BC Premier Christy Clark's office, and finally to the downtown Vancouver Art Gallery.

While the following action on the Arthur Laing Bridge brought the issue into the spotlight for many people across the province, the BC Legislature predictably took its break for the summer and the provincial government made no



May 31, 2012. Protest to defend Musqueam territory



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

action to resolve the issue. Today, the Musqueam remain on the site around the clock to

ensure that construction doesn't pick up again and to show that they do not give up so easily when their land, history and culture are under attack.

Also among the many supporters of the Musqueam in their struggle to protect c̓əsnaʔəm is the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). Fire This Time had a chance to speak with its president, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, to gain his perspective on this growing issue.

Introduction to interview:

Support for the Musqueam continues to grow. As many First Nations from around the province, as well as grassroots, Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists have been demonstrating their solidarity in the fight to protect the site, more people are recognizing what is at stake in this struggle. Recently, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), the union currently fighting the BC government for fair treatment of its 41,000 members, publicly threw its support behind the Musqueam. In a press statement released on June 1st, BCTF President Susan Lambert stated that, "[Marpole Midden's] presence stands as yet another reminder that this land was occupied long before colonization. The archaeological site will also provide invaluable educational opportunities for future students and scholars."

Fire This Time: Can you tell us about the support that the Musqueam have received

from other Indigenous people in the province?

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip: As time goes on with respect to growing awareness of the desecration of the burial site at Marpole Midden in Southern Vancouver, the support has increased greatly for the Musqueam First Nation. As more and more First Nations across the country become aware of this terrible unjust situation of deliberate desecration of their sacred burial sites by developers, with the province standing idly by on the sidelines, more and more First Nations are communicating with the Musqueam, expressing their complete solidarity and support. Certainly throughout the province of British Columbia, Musqueam enjoys broad based support from all of the First Nations, and a growing number of human rights groups, multi-faith groups, etc.

FTT: What about the lack of response from the BC Liberal government? Why do you think they are doing this?

Chief Phillip: Well, the BC Liberal government seems to be in a state of confusion on a whole range of issues and the Premier does not have readily available to her the guidance of her caucus and cabinet colleagues, so she is relying on a very tight-knit group of outsiders – advisors from the Harper camp. And quite frankly, she is so paralyzed by fear of making political mistakes that she is choosing to do nothing in regards to a lot of important issues. Certainly the Musqueam, and the desecration of their sacred burial

continued on page 29



Depleted uranium shell in Fallujah

HOW THE U.S. DESTROYED IRAQ: THE TRAGEDY OF FALLUJAH

By Aaron Mercredi

Iraq lies in shambles. More than nine years of war and devastation by the US and its imperialist allies have transformed the area of the world known as the 'Cradle of Civilization' into a raw, wounded land. From the beginning of George Bush's 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' in March 2003, to Barack Obama's recent so-called 'US troop withdrawal', the Iraqi people have suffered, are suffering, and will continue to suffer as a result of this genocidal war.

Millions of pages still cannot cover the deceit and failures of this war. 'Weapons of mass destruction' is now such a taboo term that the former leaders in Washington who first made this claim keep pointing the blame to one another in their dry memoirs. But now it doesn't matter, does it? The invasion went ahead; the military occupation forces set up camp and took the Iraqi people through the hell of murders, checkpoints and Abu Ghraib, not to mention the full-scale attack on their schools, hospitals, electrical and water system that would have provided some sort of infrastructure for the people. It is estimated that 1.5 million Iraqis fell to the bullets and bombs of the occupation forces, another 1.3 million were internally displaced and 1.6 million became refugees abroad.

But of all the problems in Iraq, the main crisis for the US was its inability to establish itself in the country. Throughout every stage of its plan, from toppling the government of Saddam Hussein to suppressing Iraq's self-determination by directly occupying the country to plundering its oil wealth and placing itself in a more strategic military position in the Middle East, it met opposition in every town and city in Iraq. The success of the US mission would be at the expense of the Iraqi people. But

they were determined to not let this happen. Ultimately, no amount of occupation forces could stop the striking Iraqi workers, the demonstrations and armed attacks on unwelcome soldiers.

The US military machine attacked most fiercely the areas that showed the most resistance to the occupation, and nobody knows the devastation and suffering caused by the US military more than the heroic people of Fallujah. They have paid an extremely high price for standing up to the strongest military the world has ever seen.

Fallujah: A City of Resistance

Fallujah lies roughly 70 kilometres west of Baghdad on the Euphrates River. Known as the 'city of mosques', for its 200 mosques found in the city and surrounding areas, its 350,000 residents were already all too familiar with the destructive nature of Western imperialist armies. During the Gulf War of 1991, it suffered one of the highest tolls of civilian casualties at the hands of US and British Forces.

After the US and its allies dug their heels into Iraqi soil in 2003, occupation forces no longer had to contend with the Iraqi military, but with an Iraqi population and resistance determined to rid their land of these invaders. Fallujah would become a hot spot for them. While US soldiers had menaced the local population for months - including the murder of 17 people who were protesting the transformation of a school into a US military headquarters - Fallujah made headlines on March 31st, 2004, when four US Blackwater contractors were killed and their bodies burned on the bridge over the Euphrates River. In retaliation, the US launched 'Operation Vigilant Resolve' against the city, a heavy military offensive that was supposed to be jointly operated with the new Iraqi

National Guard. Too bad for them that their new Iraqi recruits took off their uniforms and deserted the morning of the raid. Despite two months of fighting and heavy casualties, the US eventually had to give up and declare a ceasefire.

The US military could not let Fallujah go. They continued airstrikes on the city, increasing these attacks in October 2004 in preparation for another large-scale assault. On November 7th, 2004, the offensive was publicly authorized by Iyad Allawi, the Iraqi Prime Minister whose puppet strings stretched all the way to White House, as well as another one against the people of Ramadi, who were fighting their own battle another 40 kilometres down the river.

Dubbed 'Operation Phantom Fury', the US and its allies stormed Fallujah's western outskirts the next day. For more than six weeks, the city engaged in a heavy battle between Iraqi resistance and the imperialist allied forces. The sophisticated weaponry employed by the US included white phosphorous, despite the fact that its use contravened the Geneva Convention. Later it was discovered that depleted uranium and other secret weaponry were also used by the US. For the US military, the Battle of Fallujah brought back memories of Vietnam and the heavy urban combat they faced there before they were kicked out by the Vietnamese. But by the end of December 2004, the US assault had flattened the city. US officials reported that "more than half of Fallujah's 39,000 homes were damaged, and about 10,000 of those were destroyed." Along with this damage to infrastructure, more than 6,000 Iraqi men, women and children were killed.

Casualties are Born Every Day

While the Battle of Fallujah saw the highest number of civilian casualties than any



other offensive during the occupation of Iraq, eight years later the numbers of dead and wounded continues to grow. Fallujah's children now fill hospitals and cemeteries. This is the legacy that the US and its allies left in Fallujah with their own sophisticated 'weapons of mass destruction'.

Researchers have found links connecting the weaponry used in Fallujah to a nightmarish drop in its residents' health.

In a study titled "Cancer, Infant Mortality And Birth-Sex Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005-2009", conducted by Dr. Christopher Busby, Malak Hamdan and Entesar Ariabi, it concluded that the dramatic rise in infant mortality, cancer and leukemia exceed those reported by survivors of the atomic bomb catastrophe in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The researchers discovered that infant mortality was found to be 80 per 1,000 births,

compared to 19 in Egypt, 17 in Jordan, and 9.7 in Kuwait. A very significant finding was that the sex ratio between newborn boys and girls had changed. Typically, the

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scan QR code
to hear Lowkey's
"Cradle of
Civilization"



CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

LOWKEY is a Poet, Playwright, Political Activist and award winning Hip Hop Artist. He is based in England as was born to a British father from Dover and an Arab mother, herself born in Baghdad.

If my mother got angry or frustrated with me, she'd say...
... and the basic translation of that is "Oh, how beautiful is freedom"
But where is freedom?
Close my eyes, I can still hear my ummi saying
Where is our freedom?
This is for Baghdad, the place of my mothers birth
The cradle of civilization, for what it's worth
The land I've never the seen, culture I've never known
Iraq is in my heart, my blood, my flesh and bones
The air I've never breathed, fragrance I've never smelled
The pride I never had, the nationality that I never felt
Saddam was bad, are the American's even more so?
They made me grow like I was missing part of my torso
But I never picked up a grenade in my garden
I never saw people I love die starving
I never saw my family die through many years of sanctions
While the ruler's family lived in palaces and mansions
Never had a family member kidnapped for a ransom
Never lost a friend to violence that was random
Bombings, occupation, torture, intimidation
A million dead people doesn't equal liberation
Close my eyes, I can still hear my ummi saying
Listen! Where is our freedom?
Forget division based on ethnicity or religion
Whether you Sunni, Shia, Kurdish or Christian
Pain is still pain if you're a person that's missing
We all deserve a life in this earth that we live in
Is there enough words that can say
How deeply Baghdad is burning today?
And it's not about pity, hands out or sympathy
It's about pride, respect, honour and dignity
Babies being born with deformities from uranium

Those babies aren't just Iraqi, they're Mesopotamian
What I view on the news is making me shiver
Cause I look at the victims and see the same face in the mirror
This system of division makes it harder for you and me
Peace is a question, the only answer is unity!
So many dreams about this place that I've never seen
The place my family had to leave in the 70's
Close my eyes, I can still hear my ummi saying
Where is our freedom?
It rains white phosphorus in Fallujah
This is for those that won't live to see the future
Sorry that I wasn't there, Sorry that I couldn't help
I'm sorry for every tear, Sorry you've been put through hell
Still I feel like an immigrant, englishman amongst arabs and an arab amongst englishmen
Like I said they never gave me the culture
But they did give me Kubdad Haleb, Hakaka and Dolma
Ana isme Kareem, Wa ohmre thalatha wa-'ishrun,
Umi min Baghdad, wa abuya min Dover,
And that's the combination that I carry on my shoulders
Still I rep, till my death, Till they kill and seal my flesh
From now all the way back to Gilgamesh
Such a villianized and criticized nation
You will always be the cradle of civilization
Close my eyes, I can still hear my ummi saying
Where is our freedom?
In my sleep, in my dreams Motherland I can still feel you calling me
In my sleep, in my dreams Motherland I can still feel you calling me
In my sleep, in my dreams Motherland I can still feel you calling me
I can still feel you calling me
I can still feel you calling me

Bolivarian Revolution: Alive and Dynamic

An Interview with Merli Vanegas, Consul General of Venezuela in Vancouver

By Noah Fine

Merli Vanegas is a Bolivarian and socialist lawyer. She is the daughter of workers and was born in Barrio La Cruz de Chacao, Caracas. She initially worked for the Bolivarian Government in the National Assembly, and has served as a Legal Advisor in different governmental institutions, including the Bolivarian University of

Fire This Time: Before everything else, let me ask you the question that many people around the world are asking, and which we of course as supporters of the Venezuelan Revolution are concerned with too. Basically I would like to ask how the health of our compañero Hugo Chávez is and what stage of treatment he is going through.

Merli Vanegas: As we have seen in his recent public appearances, the recovery of our President is moving, like our Bolivarian Revolution, "at the speed of the conquerors" as we say in Venezuela. In recent weeks he has been seen again directing the Council of Ministers with his usual vigor and his



March 6, 2012, Rally in support of Chávez in Guacara, Venezuela

Venezuela, Ministry of Higher Education, Citizen Power (an institution to combat corruption and crimes against the people), Ministry of Communication and Information, and Ministry of Labor, among others. She then joined the Foreign Ministry, where she began as Government Representative to the International Labour Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. She was a diplomat in the Embassy of Venezuela in Libya and is now Consul General in Vancouver, Canada.

usual sense of humor. Those are meetings that last for long hours and are broadcast on national television, so we know he is doing better. Of course, that's not what private mass media says, both in Venezuela and internationally.

At least once a week one of the big international news networks publishes articles saying that the health of the President is wrong, and any number of lies. Their reason for wanting to create that array of opinion and have the world believe that Chávez is very sick, is simply the fact that the right wing candidate has no chance to beat Chávez in the elections on October 7th, as shown by all surveys.

For international hegemonic forces, lying about the President's health is one of

many strategies to try to weaken his image. However, they have not succeeded. Chávez remains the most popular and is drawn out as the winner even in the polls made by companies of the right wing. Still, we must be very careful with the lies of the international news networks. Let us not forget that they might be trying to create arrays to justify a possible military attack on our country, something that the Venezuelan people would not sit idly by for.

FTT: With the right wing united behind one candidate for the first time since President Hugo Chávez came to power, do you see any serious challenges to President Chávez in the upcoming October 7th Venezuelan elections?

Vanegas: If we talk about unity in our country, we can say that since the Comandante President came to power in December 1998 with a revolutionary political model, inclusion, participation and equality, have become part of the Venezuelan people, who really have been attached to their leader. Revolutionary politics since the beginning of Chávez's government have been designed to address the social emergency, combating poverty and exclusion of the majority. Therefore, it is the people who arguably have been favored and for whom justice has been done during these thirteen years of the Bolivarian Revolution. In this time, the Venezuelan opposition has never been united. We can now say with sadness that there is something that unites them: removing of Chávez from power. In these thirteen years, they have conspired, sabotaged and led a coup. Now they come with misleading and fraudulent electoral promises, such as a law to ensure the social missions [different programs designed by the Chávez government to bring improvements to people's quality of life, including healthcare, food access, education and literacy]. The people of Venezuela know that it was President Chávez who created the missions, and that these missions represent the largest effort ever known by the nation to address the needs of the people. Therefore, we are convinced

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Revolución Bolivariana: Vivo y Dinámico

Una entrevista con Merli Vanegas,
Cónsul General de Venezuela en Vancouver



27 de abril 2012,
los pueblos indígenas orar por Chávez



6 de marzo 2012, manifestación para Chávez,
en Guacara Venezuela

Por Noah Fine

Merli Vanegas, abogada bolivariana y socialista. Hija de obreros y nacida en el Barrio La Cruz de Chacao-Caracas, inicio su ejercicio en el Gobierno Bolivariano en la Asamblea Nacional, de allí paso ha desempeñarse como Consultora Jurídica en diferentes organismos del Poder Publico, tales como la Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela, Ministerio de Educación Superior, Poder Ciudadano, Ministerio de Comunicación e Información, Ministerio del Trabajo, entre otros. Luego ingresa a la Cancillería donde comienza como Representante Gubernamental para la Organización Internacional del Trabajo en Ginebra-Suiza, fue Diplomática en la Embajada de Venezuela en Libia y actualmente Cónsul General en Vancouver- Canadá.

Fire This Time: Muchas gracias Merli por hacer esta entrevista con el diario Fire This Time. ¿Cómo está la salud de nuestro compañero Hugo Chávez y por cuál etapa del tratamiento está pasando?

Merli Vanegas: Como hemos podido ver en sus más recientes apariciones públicas, la recuperación de nuestro Presidente está avanzando igual que nuestra Revolución Bolivariana "a paso de vencedores", como decimos en Venezuela. En las últimas semanas se le ha visto de nuevo dirigiendo los Consejos de Ministros con el vigor acostumbrado y hasta su habitual sentido del humor. Esas son jornadas que duran largas horas y son transmitidos en televisión nacional. Por eso sabemos que está bien.

Por supuesto, eso no es lo que dicen los grandes medios de comunicación privados, tanto en Venezuela como internacionalmente. Al menos una vez por semana alguna de las grandes cadenas de noticias internacionales publica artículos diciendo que la salud del Presidente está mal, y cualquier cantidad de mentiras. La razón de querer crear esa matriz de opinión y creer al mundo que Chávez está mal, es simplemente el hecho que el candidato de la derecha no tiene ninguna posibilidad de vencer a Chávez en las elecciones del próximo 7 de octubre, tal como lo demuestran todas las encuestas.

Para las fuerzas hegemónicas internacionales, mentir sobre la salud del Presidente es una de sus tantas estrategias para tratar de debilitar su imagen. Sin embargo, no lo han logrado. Chávez sigue teniendo la mayor popularidad y sigue dibujándose como vencedor incluso en las encuestas hechas por empresas de derecha.

Hay que ser muy cuidadosos con las mentiras de las cadenas internacionales de noticias. No olvidemos que podrían estar tratando de crear matrices para justificar una posible agresión militar a nuestro país, algo ante lo cual el pueblo venezolano no se quedaría cruzado de brazos.

FTT: Con la derecha unida detrás de un solo candidato por primera vez desde que el presidente Hugo Chávez llegó al poder, ¿cree que es un desafío serio en las próximas elecciones de octubre 7 al presidente Chávez?

Vanegas: Si hablamos de unidad en nuestro país, podemos decir que desde que el Comandante Presidente llegó al Poder en diciembre de 1998 con un modelo político revolucionario, de inclusión, de participación, de igualdad, es el Pueblo venezolano, el que realmente ha estado unido a

su líder. Ya que las políticas revolucionarias desde el inicio del Gobierno han sido destinadas a enfrentar la emergencia social, luchar contra la pobreza y la exclusión de la mayoría, por lo tanto es el pueblo quien ha sido favorecido indiscutiblemente, es a quien se le ha hecho justicia social en estos trece años de Revolución Bolivariana.

La oposición venezolana jamás ha estado unida, podríamos decir con tristeza que solo hay algo que la une: el sacar a Chávez del Poder. En estos trece años, han conspirado, han saboteado, dieron un golpe de estado. Ahora vienen con promesas electorales engañosas y fraudulentas como una ley para garantizar las misiones sociales, cuando el Pueblo de Venezuela sabe que quien creo las misiones fue el Presidente Chávez, y que estas representan el mayor esfuerzo público que haya conocido la Nación para enfrentar las necesidades del Pueblo.

Por lo tanto tenemos la convicción que este 7 de octubre será una victoria más del Pueblo venezolano en apoyo irrestricto al Presidente Chávez.

FTT: ¿Dónde está el ALBA hoy 7 años después de su fundación y cuál es el significado, el impacto que ha tenido en otros países latinoamericanos distintos de los países miembros del ALBA? ¿Hay alguna posibilidad de recibir nuevos miembros?

Vanegas: El ALBA es la Patria Grande, es el sueño de nuestros Libertadores, Miranda, Bolívar, Martí, Petion, entre otros, hecho realidad. Es en el 2001 en una Cumbre de Jefes de Estado, cuando el Presidente Chávez señala la necesidad de un nuevo modelo de integración entre los pueblos hermanos, un modelo que hiciera frente al nefasto modelo económico imperialista y capitalista mejor conocido como ALCA, una nueva forma de cooperación, de integración, complementación y respeto de la autodeterminación y soberanía de los pueblos. En diciembre de 2004 se convocó

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An Honest Clarification

REFLECTIONS BY
FIDEL CASTRO



Some days ago, on May 28, the violent battle waged at El Uvero was commemorated with well deserved references. An elemental duty forces me to clarify the facts.

During those weeks, Manuel Piñeiro, “Red Beard”, as the leopard, who never changes its spots, as the saying goes, managed to send to Santiago de Cuba a truckload of weapons that were associated to the attack against the Presidential Palace by the Revolutionary Directorate. Somehow he had managed to take hold of them. Frank País, who was the national actions chief of our “26 of July Movement”, sent a significant part of that cargo to the troublesome zone of the Sierra Maestra, where our incipient Rebel Army was rising alive from its ashes.

That learning period had been extremely tough. Step by step we started to gain our first victories, through which we were able to increase our strength in weapons and men without suffering any casualty. We were also forced to cope with the dangerous treason perpetrated by Eutimio Guerra, who had been a rebel peasant until the moment when he yielded to the bountiful offers made by the enemy. Despite all obstacles and with the support of the men and means sent by Frank we began to create the first guerrilla detachment with a vanguard that was headed by Camilo; a rearguard that was commanded by Efigenio Ameijeiras; the centre forces made up by small platoons and the General Command. We already had a group of seasoned fighters who had conveniently adapted to the conditions of the theatre of operations when we received a significant cache of weapons that were rescued by “Red Beard” and had been conveyed to us hidden inside some

barrels filled with thick grease.

Was it correct, from the military and revolutionary points of view, to attack the entrenched and well armed garrison close to the seashore, in the same place used to ship the timber

extracted from that area? Why did we do so?

It so happened that at that time, on the month of May, the “Corynthia” expedition had already landed, headed by Calixto Sánchez White. A strong feeling of solidarity made us launch the attack against

the telescopic sight rifle that I had, aiming to the radio communication equipment of the garrison. After that shot, tens of bullets were fired against the enemy command post. That was why the adversary did not know that its garrison was under attack. Thus, at least for three hours neither bombs nor shells were shot against us, something that usually happened, without exception, hardly 20 minutes after the beginning of every battle. Without the presence of these factors, it was quite likely that this decision, which was only inspired by solidarity, would have reduced our troops of almost one hundred veterans, in which case we would have had to go through the same hazardous journey all over again, something that would have been for us the best case scenario.



It was under such circumstances that Almeida was shot in the chest; he was spared from a far more serious wound thanks to something made of metal that he was carrying in his pocket, as he remembered. Guillermo García, wearing a helmet he found for himself in the first combat, waged a hard-fought battle with the defender of a fort made of thick logs. Che, who was shooting with a machine gun that usually got jammed, left his position in order to engage those who were fighting Almeida. And Raúl moved on with his small platoon to fight the soldiers who entrenched themselves among the piles of logs that were ready for shipment. All this happened before the fighter bombers came into the scene. Julio Díaz, a courageous fighter who was shooting with a tripod, could not advance any further. He was lying by my side with a deadly gunshot in his forehead.

Is there a better understanding now about what happened on May 28, 1957, 55 years ago?

the military garrison at El Uvero.

In full honesty I should say that the decision adopted, leaving out the merit of the solidarity it entailed wasn't in the least correct. Our role, which prevailed over any other goal, just as had been the case throughout our entire revolutionary life, was not in accordance with that decision.

I remember the first gunshot I made with

Fidel Castro Ruz
June 1st, 2012



Un Esclarecimiento Honesto

Hace unos días, el 28 de mayo, se conmemoró con merecidas referencias el violento Combate del Uvero. Un deber elemental me obliga a esclarecer los hechos.

Por aquellas semanas Manuel Piñero, “Barbarroja”, genio y figura hasta la sepultura como dice la frase, hizo llegar a Santiago de Cuba un camión con armas asociadas al ataque a Palacio por el Directorio Revolucionario, que de alguna forma habían ido a parar a sus manos. Frank País, responsable nacional de acción de nuestro Movimiento 26 de Julio, remitió una parte importante de ese cargamento a la difícil zona de la Sierra Maestra, donde nuestro naciente Ejército Rebelde brotaba de sus cenizas.

Aquel aprendizaje había sido sumamente duro. Paso a paso íbamos librando las primeras acciones victoriosas en las que incrementábamos nuestras fuerzas en armas y hombres, sin baja alguna. Nos vimos a su vez obligados a enfrentar la peligrosa traición de Eutimio Guerra, quien había sido un campesino rebelde hasta el momento en que cedió a las abundantes ofertas del enemigo. A pesar de los obstáculos, y con el apoyo de hombres y medios que nos enviaba Frank, fuimos creando el primer destacamento guerrillero: con vanguardia, bajo el mando de Camilo; retaguardia, con Efigenio Ameijeiras; centro, con pequeños pelotones; y la Comandancia General. Había ya un curtido grupo de combatientes con valiosa adaptación al terreno cuando, en bidones de espesa grasa, llegó un buen lote de las armas rescatadas por “Barbarroja”.

¿Fue acaso correcto desde el punto de vista militar y revolucionario atacar la guarnición atrincherada y bien armada en la misma orilla del mar, donde se embarcaba la madera extraída de aquella zona? ¿Por

qué lo hicimos?

Ocurrió que en ese momento, el mes de mayo, se había producido el desembarco del “Corynthia” bajo la dirección de Calixto Sánchez White. Un fuerte sentimiento de solidaridad nos llevó a realizar el ataque contra la guarnición del Uvero.

Debo señalar con toda honestidad que la decisión adoptada, si se excluye el mérito

sobre el puesto de mando enemigo. El adversario no supo por eso que su guarnición estaba siendo atacada. Dispusimos así de tres horas por lo menos sin que bombas y metralla cayeran sobre nosotros; lo que ocurría invariablemente apenas 20 minutos después que se iniciara cualquier combate. Sin tales factores es muy probable que aquella decisión, inspirada solo en la solidaridad, redujera nuestras fuerzas de casi cien veteranos y fuese necesario comenzar de nuevo su azaroso camino, en el mejor de los casos.

Fue en aquellas condiciones que Almeida resultó impactado en el pecho y protegido de una herida más grave por algo de metal, según recordó, que llevaba en el bolsillo; Guillermo García, con un casco fruto del primer combate, mantuvo reñido duelo con el defensor de un fortín de gruesos troncos; el Che, con fusil ametralladora que se encasquillaba, se separó de su puesto para sostener un duelo con los que combatían contra Almeida; y Raúl avanzó con su pequeño pelotón contra los soldados atrincherados en las estibas de troncos dispuestos para el embarque; todo antes de que aparecieran los cazabombarderos. Julio Díaz, bravo combatiente que disparaba con una trípode, no pudo avanzar; yacía a mi lado con un balazo mortal en la frente.

¿Se comprende ahora lo que ocurrió aquel 28 de mayo de 1957, hace 55 años?



de la solidaridad que entrañaba, no fue en absoluto correcta. Nuestro papel, al cual se subordinaba cualquier otro objetivo, tal como se hizo a lo largo de nuestra vida revolucionaria, no se ajustaba a aquella decisión.

Recuerdo el primer disparo del fusil de mirilla telescópica que yo utilizaba, dirigido al equipo de radio de la guarnición. Tras aquel disparo, decenas de balas cayeron

Fidel Castro Ruz
Junio 1 de 2012



THE HORRIBLE THINGS THAT THE EMPIRE OFFERS US

A piece of news released by AP, the most important US news agency, dated today in Monterrey, Mexico, explains it with irrefutable clarity. This is not the first, and certainly it won't be the last, about a reality that puts paid to the mountain of lies with which the United States intends to justify the inhuman destiny it reserves for the peoples of our America.

group "Los Zetas."

"The victims could have been killed as long as two days ago, so authorities believe they were not murdered on the spot. 'Identifying them will be a difficult task because all of them were beheaded and hacked off their hands and feet', the official said.

"The state Attorney-General, Adrián de la Garza, said that no reports of local missing people had been received in recent days, so

linked to the presidential elections to take place this July. 'It has the dynamic of a war between cartels', he said."

For its part, the Internet portal 'BBC World' reported as follows:

"The scene of decapitated and mutilated bodies in Nuevo León, where 49 bodies were dumped on the road this Sunday, shocked many for the extreme barbarity displayed by the killers. Even in Mexico, where after five years of intense war among drug cartels it seemed like they had seen it all."

Not a few countries of Our America have been affected by these problems.

In our homeland, the problems described here do not exist: would this be the reason why the empire is trying to make it sur-



What does the news say?

"MONTERREY, Mexico (AP).- Forty-nine decapitated and mutilated corpses were found abandoned in a pool of blood in a highway connecting the Mexican metropolis of Monterrey to the US border in what seems to be the latest in an escalation war between drug cartels.

"The corpses of 43 men and 6 women were found at about 4 a.m. Sunday in the town of San Juan on a non-toll highway that leads to the border city of Reynosa. A white stone arch welcoming visitors was spray-painted with black letters: "100% Zeta."

"At a news conference in Nuevo Leon state security spokesman Jorge Domene stated that along with the decomposing bodies, a 'narcomanta' had been found at the scene, in which authorship is attributed to the

the victims could be persons from other Mexican states or even US-bound Central American immigrants."

"Mexican drug cartels have been waging and ever bloodier war seeking to take control over trafficking routes as well as the local drugs market and extortion, whose victims include US-bound immigrants."

"So far in May, 18 bodies were found in a tourist area near Guadalajara; 23 people were found decapitated or hung from a bridge in the border city of Nuevo Laredo, where violence among cartels has escalated. This year alone, cadavers have been found in the states of Veracruz, Guerrero, Morelos, Jalisco, Tamaulipas and Nuevo León.

"He stated that there were no clues indicating that the new wave of violence is

render by starvation and hostility? Half a century has not been enough, and I very much doubt that the empire can wait for another half a century before it sinks deep in its own mire, sooner than later.

Fidel Castro Ruz
May 14, 2012



LOS HORRORES QUE EL IMPERIO NOS OFRECE

Un despacho de la principal agencia de noticias norteamericana AP, fechado hoy en Monterrey, México, lo explica con irrefutable claridad. No es el primero, ni será sin duda el último, sobre una realidad que echa por tierra la montaña de mentiras con que Estados Unidos pretende justificar el destino inhumano que reserva a los pueblos de Nuestra América.

¿Qué narra el despacho?

“MONTERREY, México (AP) Cuarenta y nueve cadáveres decapitados y mutilados fueron hallados en un charco de sangre abandonados en una carretera que conecta

tas se atribuyó la matanza.

“Los cuerpos podrían haber tenido hasta 48 horas sin vida, por lo que las autoridades creen que no fueron asesinados en el sitio. ‘Ninguno tiene cabeza y fueron mutilados de sus extremidades inferiores y superiores, lo que complica la identificación’, dijo el funcionario.”

“El procurador del estado, Adrián de la Garza, dijo que no existe denuncia de desaparecidos en los últimos días, por lo que podría tratarse de gente de otros estados mexicanos o incluso migrantes centroamericanos que buscaban dirigirse

que junto a los cuerpos en descomposición se encontró una ‘narcómanta’, en la que el grupo de Los Ze-

Jalisco, Tamaulipas y Nuevo León.”

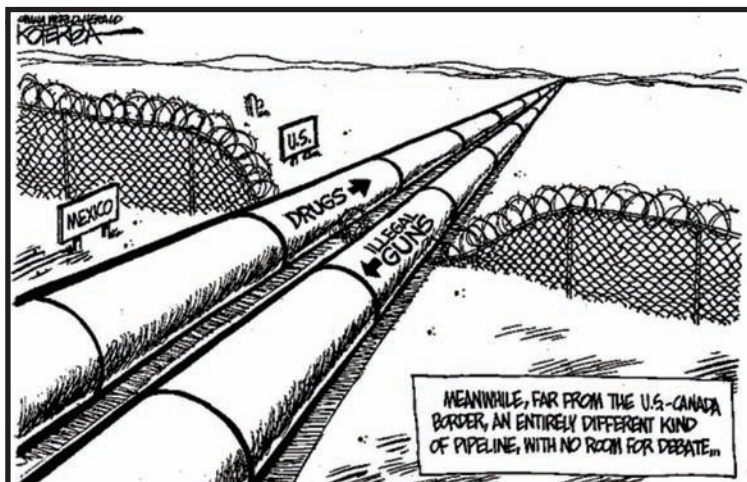
“Afirmó que no existen pistas de que la nueva ola de violencia tenga relación con las elecciones presidenciales que se celebrarán en julio. ‘Es la dinámica de la guerra entre Carteles’, dijo.”

Por su parte el portal de Internet BBC Mundo, informa que:

“Las escenas de cuerpos decapitados y mutilados en Nuevo León, donde 49 cuerpos fueron arrojados a la carretera este domingo, sacudieron a muchos por la extrema barbarie exhibida por los asesinos. Incluso en México, que después de cinco años de intensa guerra entre cárteles parecía haberlo visto todo.”

No pocos de los países de Nuestra América están afectados por estos problemas.

En nuestra Patria, los problemas que aquí se relatan, no existen; ¿será por eso que el imperio trata de rendirla por hambre y



el norte de la metrópoli mexicana de Monterrey con la frontera de Estados Unidos, en lo que parece ser el golpe más reciente de una escalada de la guerra de intimidación entre bandas de narcotraficantes.

“Los cadáveres de 43 hombres y 6 mujeres fueron encontrados a las 4 de la mañana del domingo cerca del poblado de San Juan, en una carretera que no cobra peaje y que conduce a la ciudad fronteriza de Reynosa. En el arco de piedra que recibe a los visitantes al pueblo alguien escribió con aerosol la leyenda ‘100% Zeta’.”

“El vocero de seguridad del gobierno del estado nortero de Nuevo León, Jorge Domene, dijo en conferencia de prensa

a Estados Unidos.”

“Los Carteles mexicanos de la droga han estado librando una guerra cada vez más sangrienta para controlar las rutas de contrabando, así como el mercado local de drogas y la extorsión, cuyas víctimas incluyen a los migrantes que buscan llegar a Estados Unidos.

“En lo que va de mayo, 18 cuerpos fueron encontrados en una zona turística cerca de Guadalajara; 23 cadáveres aparecieron decapitados o colgados de un puente en la ciudad fronteriza de Nuevo Laredo, donde la violencia entre los Carteles ha escalado. Este año han aparecido cuerpos en los estados de Veracruz, Guerrero, Morelos,

hostilidad? Medio siglo no ha sido suficiente, y dudo mucho que el imperio disponga de otro medio siglo antes de que, más temprano que tarde, se hunda en su propio fango.

Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro Ruz
Mayo 14 de 2012

OUR STRUGGLE

AROUND THE WORLD

Victory for Carlos Montes!

Thanks to all the AFGJ supporters who acted on our alerts in support of Carlos Montes! The following is from our friends at the Committee to Stop FBI Repression.

Victory Against Repression: Carlos Montes Court Case Ends in Victory!

Los Angeles, CA - On June 5, 2012 Carlos Montes' criminal court prosecution ended in a victory for Carlos and the movement.

Carlos Montes' home was raided on May 17, 2011, by the combined forces of the LA County Sheriff's Swat Team and the FBI, by crashing his door down at 5:00 a.m., with automatic assault rifles drawn, almost killing him.. He was charged with 6 serious felonies with a possible jail time of up to 18 years.

With local and national support, via solidarity protests, call-in campaigns to President Obama and U.S. Attorney General Holder, local rallies and protests, and an offensive legal strategy, two felonies were dropped - this was a first partial victory. However the District Attorney still stated that they wanted Montes to do at least 5 years in state prison for the 4 felony charges remaining.

The local and national Committees Against FBI Repression launched a petition drive and a "Call the D.A." campaign, with phone banking and a robo call by Carlos to over 4 000 supporters, urging folks to call District Attorney Steve Cooley. The D.A.'s office was flooded with calls and letters.

The local D.A. on the case then sought for a resolution and proposed to drop three additional felonies, if Carlos pled out to one count of perjury. This proposal included no jail time, three years of probation and community service. Under advice from supporters, friends and his attorney Montes moved forward with this proposal.

This is a victory for Carlos Montes and the movement against police political repression. A trial had the danger of him being convicted of four felonies with jail time and the additional old felony - a total of 5 felonies. At this point Carlos is out of jail, will continue to organize against repression, for public education, against U.S.-led wars and for immigrant rights. He is already planning to attend the protest at the Republican National Convention on August 27, 2012 in Tampa, Florida.

Next steps: The local committee with supporters and rank-and-file members of SEIU 721 will hold a victory party to thank everyone who worked on this campaign and to help pay off legal expenses. It is set for Saturday, June 23, 7:00 p.m. Details will follow.

Carlos wants to thank all the people, organizations, unions and community people who worked and supported him in this struggle against police/political repression.

The struggle continues to defend the 23 other anti-war and international solidarity activists who are STILL under an FBI investigation for showing solidarity with the oppressed people of the world, especially the Palestinian and Colombian people. Stay updated via: www.stopfbi.net!

Los Angeles Committee to Stop FBI Repression

June 5, 2012



President Correa Announces that Ecuador will Withdraw from the IATRA

HAVANA, Cuba, June 5 (ACN)—Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa announced that his country will withdraw from the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (IATRA), for being an organization that only serves the interests of the United States.

The head of state set out the reasons why his government adopted that decision, in a press conference upon his arrival in Quito, the Ecuadorian capital, coming from Cochabamba, Bolivia, where he attended the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Radio Nacional de Venezuela Web site reported.

Correa recalled that the IATRA implied the commitment of the Americas of joining in the face of any extra-regional aggression; however -he specified-, when in 1982 Great Britain invaded the Falklands, Argentina didn't have due support from the organization, and to top it all, the United States supported the aggressor country.

The decision of withdrawing from the IATRA reasserts the willingness of the leadership of the People's Revolution and his leader, President Correa, of consolidating the advent of a really sovereign Latin America, and accompanying and boosting the current process of regional integration.

German Parliamentarians Demand U.S. Release of the Cuban Five

Berlin, May 24th, 2012 (Prensa Latina) German parliamentarians demanded U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to act in favour of the release and return to Cuba of the Five antiterrorists condemned to long sentences in the northern country. In a letter sent to U.S. Justice Department through the German Embassy in Washington, the 17 federal signatory legislators also expressed great.

We respectfully request you not to oppose the legal process again to achieve the return of the Five, and we would ask you also find ways to ensure graciously pardon or forgiveness of those five men, showed the letter sent to Holder.

Florian Pronold, Elke Ferner, Klaus Barthel, Petra Crone, Manfred Nink, Swen Schulz, Werner Schieder, Marco Bülow, Klaus Brandner, Ute Kumpf, Stefan Rebmann, Christoph Strißner, Waltraud Wolff, Sonja Steffen, Peter Danckert, Ottmar Schreiner and Andrea Wicklein, all members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, recalled international declarations in favor of the Cuban Five.

Doctors of the world, from Cuba to Haiti

May 31.2012-PORT-AU-PRINCE (Granma International)—A new group of 22 graduates from the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana (ELAM) has arrived in Haiti on an internationalist mission, to work alongside the Cuban Medical Brigade (BMC). Its members will provide medical attention and preventive and rehabilitation services for the Haitian people, while specializing in comprehensive general medicine.

On this occasion, these young doctors from Peru, El Salvador, Bolivia and Ecuador are joining another 20 Latin American graduates working and complementing their academic training in a number of communes in Haiti's 10 departments.

A total of 387 ELAM graduates have undertaken medical missions in Haiti from February 2010 to date. The practice of incorporating professionals from 27 countries into the Cuban medical mission, the first to do so, took place after the 2010 earthquake in order to reinforce the specialized disaster work of the Cuban Henry Reeve Brigade.

Speech Given by Alison Bodine from the Stage at Chicago Anti NATO Protest

Hello Chicago,

Hello you great protesters who on the streets of Chicago defending humanity against imperialist war machine including NATO!

Hello people of the world, we are part of your struggle and resistance against military aggression of colonial powers!

I am bringing to you the message of solidarity from people of Canada! We are with you in this march for freedom and justice, we are with you in this march against war and destruction!

These are the demands that today unite us in the struggle for an end to war and destruction and for self-determination for all nations under imperialist attack

I want to thank all the organizers of cang8 in Chicago and beyond for encouraging international participation on this day of protest! Because our cause is international, our resistance is international, our struggle is international, And yes our freedom is international. The Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, is behind that fence line as Canada is one of the US's biggest partners wielding death and destruction throughout the world through NATO, taking a leadership role in the brutal and criminal occupation of Afghanistan!

They were partner of massacre of Libyan people by sending fighter jets warships and their special forces and advisers to Libya.

Today they are on the same path of aggression with US against Syria and Iran.

But we will stop them, don't we? US, Canada, Britain or any imperialist countries we will stop you, we will defeat you. Remember Vietnam, you can't win against us. Yes, humanity and dignity will prevail. This is the new era of war and occupation. The era of increased and on going

Anti NATO Summit Protest in Chicago Marked a Big Step Toward A United Anti War Movement!

By Alison Bodine

On May 20th, 15,000 people from all over the world marched together in Chicago, filling the streets with chants of "Who's the biggest threat in the world today?

imperialist attacks that began with the invasion of Afghanistan!

An era where millions of people have been killed, millions of people displaced, and the great civilizations of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya destroyed, for the interest of imperialist corporations and accelerating and expanding this attacks not only abroad but at home too - from FBI raids of social justice and activists and organizers to the targeting of Muslims and immigrants from US and

NATO and the USA!" and "Hey hey ho ho! NATO has got to go!" This mass antiwar rally was the largest of a full week of actions organized in opposition to the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Summit held in Chicago May 20th -21st. This summit brought together the leaders of NATO member countries and their allies to discuss expanding colonial wars and occupations around the globe, focusing on their strategy for the continued occupation of Afghanistan.

Although the NATO summit lasted only two days, for over one week tens of thousands of people participated in antiwar

events including rallies, teach-ins, film showings, and conferences. People came to Chicago from around the world -- from Canada to Europe, South Asia to Latin America, and from all over the US.

Actions began with the May 12th and 13th "People's Summit," organized as a response to the summit of the leaders of colonial powers. Over 800

people attended two-days of workshops and discussions focused on building a world without war and occupation, which were organized by CANG8 (the Coalition Against NATO/G8 War and Poverty Agenda) and Occupy Chicago.

Over the next week there were dozens of rallies and educational events taking place all over Chicago. This included anti-NATO cultural events and musical performances, as well as rallies focusing on imperialist attacks both at home and abroad -- especially recent attacks on democratic and workers rights -- and rallies calling for an end to NATO and war. One of the largest actions was the "Chicago Rally to Protest Global 1%," organized by the National Nurses United union on Friday May 18th. It demanded an end to austerity measures and cuts against healthcare and education.

Then on Sunday, May 20th, a historic mass rally of over 15,000 people marched to the NATO summit meeting place organized by CANG8. Banners of all shapes and sizes stretched across some of downtown Chicago's busiest streets; the largest was



Alison Bodine in live interview with CBC at anti-NATO protest in Chicago.

Canada to Europe and all the world. Now we are being told that the enemy is Iran and Syria. But we here today must know that the biggest threat to world peace is NATO. We must stand firm against all threats of war, sanctions, and all covert and overt foreign intervention in Iran and Syria and all oppressed nations around the world. As our brothers and sisters from Afghanistan to Somalia, from Syria to Palestine fight and resist imperialism everyday we too must all commit to continued, consistent and united resistance, to mobilizing against war and destruction on both sides of the US/Canada border. It is only through this unity that we can be effective!

No to NATO!

Abolish NATO!

We Will Win

And as Che said: Venceremos!

Thank you!



a giant banner dedicated to US soldier Bradley Manning, the accused Wikileaks whistleblower, which extended over three lanes. Most importantly, the march was led by a contingent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. Following the loud and determined march over 50 US Iraq and Afghanistan war Veterans threw their medals back to the NATO war-makers in protest of the lies and deceptions of the war-mongers in Iraq and especially Afghanistan. Vancouver's peace coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) was involved in CANG8 and the organizing of this week of actions from the very beginning. MAWO sent a team of organizers to participate in the week of actions, and to bring the voice of peace-loving people from Canada to the stage in Chicago. The May 20th rally and march had many US and international organizers speaking, including the author of this article along side Reverend Jesse Jackson, civil rights leader and founding member of Rainbow PUSH Coalition; Ann Wright, retired US army reserve colonel and co-founder of Code Pink Women for Peace; Carlos Montes, from the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, and currently the victim of an FBI frame-up; Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink Women for Peace; Tom Morello from the band Rage Against the Machine; Leah Bolger, President of Veterans for Peace; Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, from the Muslim Peace Coalition and founder of the Muslim Peace Council; Reiner Braun from the 'No to War No to NATO' Coalition in Germany; and Kathy Kelly, director of Voices for Creative Non-violence. There was also a statement from Malalai Joya read by women activists from Afghans for Peace, and a very important recorded message from Mumia Abu-Jamal, journalist, revolutionary, social justice fighter, and political prisoner in the US.

Inside of the NATO summit Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, lined up with US President Obama in the imperialist strategy to continue the occupation of Afghanistan. Stephen Harper re-enforced Canada's commitment to the so-called training mission in Afghanistan, while at the same time claiming that Canadian troops would not be in Afghanistan beyond 2014. People in Canada have been told this story time and time again, and every time the government of Canada has extended their mission in Afghanistan in an continued effort to get their own piece of the pie as the resources of Afghanistan are divided up between occupying powers.

As imperialist world powers and their allies united at the NATO summit, peace-loving people from all over the world, too, were united. This week of action represented thousands of organizations, groups and coalitions from across the US and all around the world that all united under the common demands for jobs, healthcare, education, pensions, housing and the environment -- not war! No to NATO/G-8 War-makers! No to war and austerity!

In this world of increasing imperialist war and occupation that we live in today, mass actions of people united on the streets is becoming every second more important. The drone attacks, bombings, shootings, targeted assassinations, mass displacement of people, rape, torture and destruction caused by NATO and their allies will not stop until we peace-loving people from all over the world make them stop. In order to stand up against such acts we need more united international actions against war and occupation under one common demand: No to NATO! No to War! No to Occupation!

By Alison Bodine

Only a few days after returning from actions against NATO on the streets of Chicago, activists from Vancouver spoke at a public event organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), to report back about their experiences. On May 24, the delegation from MAWO, Vancouver's peace coalition, addressed a full room at Joe's Cafe on Commercial Drive, sharing video, photos and perspective about their time in Chicago.

Among the highlights of the evening was video from the May 20 mass antiwar rally that marched to the meeting place of the NATO summit. This included footage from the closing rally ceremony where over 50 US veterans who were in Iraq and Afghanistan returned their medals to the NATO leaders. Some yelled, "Free Bradley Manning!" as they denounced their own participation in the imperialist war crimes that Bradley Manning exposed. Also shown were two CBC interviews with MAWO co-chair, Alison Bodine who spoke from the main stage of the rally on May 20.

Following the videos, MAWO activists Noah Fine and Mike Larson narrated a photo slideshow of the events against NATO in the week leading up to the NATO summit, as well as from the May 20 demonstration. The photos showed the diversity, strength and unity of peace-loving people that had gathered in Chicago from all over the world. Then Alison Bodine,



Vancouver Activists Report Back from 15,000 Strong Anti-NATO March in Chicago



May 24, 2012. MAWO Report Back from Chicago.

MAWO co-chair and Tamara Hansen, MAWO and Cuba solidarity organizer both talked about their experiences in Chicago. They focused on the strength and unity of organizing, as well as the significance of an international day of action against NATO-led wars and occupations.

The significance of these actions comes especially from the experience that poor, working and oppressed people gained in the 8 months spent organizing for the historic anti-NATO actions in Chicago and coming together on the streets. MAWO organized this report back event so that some of that perspective, feeling and determination could be spread to peace-loving people in Vancouver. The anti-NATO action in Chicago helped cement a growing international antiwar movement, but it cannot be allowed to fade into history. From this week of action must come more international actions against NATO-led wars and occupations from Afghanistan to current threats against Iran and Syria. For more information on how to get involved with Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) visit www.mawovancouver.org

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Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) is an organization working to build solidarity and support for Cuba in Vancouver, Canada and internationally. To do this, we organize frequent educational events, cultural events, conferences, mobilizations and actions in support of Cuba's sovereignty against Imperialist attacks and in defence of the gains of the Cuban revolution.

We also support campaigns:

- 1- Against the US Blockade on Cuba
- 2- To Free the Cuban 5 held in US Jails
- 3- To Extradite anti-Cuban Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela

Throughout the lower mainland, at events, actions, festivals, high schools and campuses, we engage with thousands of people about Cuba. Our work aims to bring Cuba, as a country making important social gains, to youth, students, women, Latin American people, people of the third world and other working and oppressed people in Canada, as an example of building a better world.

We welcome new members and encourage everyone to get involved with VCSC to build a larger, stronger Cuba solidarity movement in Canada!

For four years now, in Iceland --that frosty island part of Europe in the middle of the North Atlantic with a population of barely 300,000 inhabitants-- interesting and new things have been happening that do not get corporate western media coverage. This confirms the unrelenting manipulation humankind is subject to due to the control the superpower and its associated oligarchies exert on the news media. In Iceland there has not been a social revolution, but something almost as serious for the upper financial hierarchy has taken place: a revolution against the tyranny of capitalist banks in a globalized world whose roots inevitably lead to Wall Street.

Thanks to its geothermal power plants, Iceland enjoys great energy independence, but the country has very few additional resources. Its economy, 40% dependant on fish exports, is very vulnerable. Just like many other European countries, it increasingly accumulated debts with speculating banks so that the country could live above its real possibilities in the neoliberal financial system promoted by the United States

NO NEWS FROM ICELAND

which the real economy is now calling to order.

Four years ago, to cope with the effects of a devastating crisis, its government nationalized the main banks in the country. In retaliation, London froze all the assets of 300,000 British customers and 910 million Euros invested in Icelandic banks by UK local administrations and public entities. The island had to use 3,700 million Euros of public money to reimburse these customers.

With a bank debt equivalent to several times its Gross National Product (GNP), Iceland's currency collapsed, its stock market suspended activities and the country went bankrupt.

Massive protests in front of the Parliament building in Reykjavik, the Icelandic capital, forced early elections in 2009 and the resignation of the conservative prime minister and all of his administration.

A draft resolution, widely discussed in Parliament, was meant to burden all the citizens of the island with the reimbursement of the 3,500 million Euros to British and Danish banks through monthly payments over the coming 15 years.

Icelanders returned to the streets demanding a referendum to pass such a law. The president acquiesced and did not ratify the law even when the draft had 44 of the 66 possible parliamentary votes. The referendum was called and the NO to the payment of the debt got 93% of the votes. After this victory of the Icelandic peaceful revolution, the IMF froze all economic aid to Iceland until the issues of the payment of the debt were solved.

The government ordered an investigation to determine the responsibility for the crisis and the arrests of bankers and high executives began. Interpol issued orders of



capture and all the involved bankers left the country.

In this context, an assembly was elected to draw up a new constitution that would include the new lessons learned from the crisis. This would replace the existing one. To draft it, 25 citizens with no political affiliation, in representation of the sovereign population, were chosen from 522 proposed candidates.

This Constitutional Assembly has been working since February 2011 on a Draft Magna Carta from recommendations with the consensus of different assemblies held all over the country. It will then need the approval of the present parliament and of the new parliament after the coming legislative elections.

The economic recovery experienced by the island after being freed from the parasitic burden of the bank debt is seen by the European capitalist cupolas as a dangerous

example for "sluggish" countries like Greece and Ireland. Most of all because the recent successes Iceland has been achieving have led many economists to consider it was the collapse of the banks that contributed the most to this progress.

With the crisis resolved through not paying the debt, the Icelandic economy not only did not collapse, but will close year 2011 with a 2.1% growth and a 1.5% in year 2012, a figure that triples that of the countries in the Euro zone. A great part of this growth is based on production increases, mainly in tourism and the fishing industry. This is in contrast with the image displayed by other European economies in stalemate or decline.

Iceland has shown that by recovering its sovereignty, justice and dignity came along.

The corrupt politicians and bankers have

been prosecuted. To reaffirm its independence, Iceland last fall became the first European country to recognize Palestine as an independent nation; something that no country under the yoke of the international capitalist banking system has been able to do.

A CubaNews translation.

Edited by Walter Lippmann.

<http://www.walterlippmann.com/docs3434.html>

**Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*



SIN NOTICIAS DE ISLANDIA

Por Manuel Yepe*

Hace cuatro años que en Islandia, esa glacial isla adscrita a Europa que descansa en medio de Atlántico Norte con apenas unos 300.000 habitantes, ocurren cosas interesantes y novedosas que no se reflejan en los medios corporativos de occidente, confirmando la manipulación inexorable de que es objeto la humanidad por el control que sobre los medios de prensa en el mundo ejercen la superpotencia y las oligarquías a ella adscritas.

En Islandia no ha tenido lugar una revolución social, pero sí ha ocurrido algo casi tan grave para la alta jerarquía de las finanzas: una revolución contra la tiranía de los bancos capitalistas en un mundo globalizado con raíces que conducen inexorablemente a Wall Street.

Aunque gracias a sus centrales geotérmicas Islandia disfruta de gran independencia energética, el país dispone de muy escasos recursos naturales adicionales y su economía, dependiente en un 40% de las exportaciones pesqueras, es por ello muy vulnerable. Al igual que los demás países europeos, se fue endeudando con la banca en la especulación para vivir por encima de sus posibilidades reales en el sistema financiero neoliberal impulsado por Estados Unidos al que ahora la economía real ajusta cuentas.

Para hacer frente a los efectos de una devastadora crisis, hace cuatro años, su gobierno nacionalizó los principales bancos del país y, en represalia, Londres congeló todos los activos de 300.000 clientes británicos y 910 millones de euros invertidos en bancos islandeses por administraciones locales y

entidades públicas del Reino Unido. La isla tuvo que dedicar 3.700 millones de euros de dinero público a rembolsar a esos clientes.

Con una deuda bancaria de Islandia equivalente a varias veces su Producto Interno Bruto (PIB), la moneda se desplomó, la bolsa suspendió su actividad y el país cayó en bancarota. Protestas multitudinarias frente al parlamento en Reykjavik, la capital islandesa, obligaron en 2009 a convocar a elecciones anticipadas que a su vez provocaron la dimisión del Primer Ministro conservador y de todo su gobierno, en bloque.

Un proyecto de ley ampliamente debatido en el parlamento planteaba descargar sobre todos los ciudadanos de la isla el reembolso a bancos británicos y daneses de la deuda de 3.500 millones de euros mediante el pago por éstos en mensualidades durante los próximos 15 años. El pueblo volvió a las calles exigiendo someter a referéndum tal ley. El Presidente accedió y no la ratificó pese a que el proyecto contaba con 44 de los 66 votos en el Parlamento. Se convocó al referéndum y el NO al pago de la deuda logró el 93% de los votos.

Ante tal victoria de la revolución pacífica islandesa, el FMI congeló toda ayuda económica a Islandia hasta tanto se resolviera el asunto del pago de la deuda.

El gobierno dispuso una investigación para ventilar las responsabilidades de la crisis y comenzaron las detenciones de banqueros y altos ejecutivos. La Interpol dictó una orden de captura y todos los banqueros implicados abandonaron el país.

En este contexto se elige una asamblea para redactar una nueva Constitución que recoja las lecciones aprendidas de la crisis y que sustituya a la actual. Para ello, se recurre directamente al pueblo soberano representado por 25 ciudadanos sin filiación política elegidos entre 522 candidatos propuestos.

La asamblea constitucional trabaja desde febrero de 2011 en un proyecto de Carta Magna a partir de las recomendaciones consensuadas en distintas asambleas que se celebran por todo el país. Deberá luego ser aprobado por el actual Parlamento y por el que se constituya tras las próximas elecciones legislativas.

La recuperación económica experimentada por la isla tras liberarse de la carga parasitaria de la deuda con los bancos es vista por las cúpulas capitalistas europeas como un peligroso ejemplo para países que tildan de "morosos", como Grecia e Irlanda. Sobre todo porque los éxitos recientes que viene logrando Islandia han llevado a muchos economistas a considerar que ha sido el colapso de los bancos lo que más ha ayudado a tales avances.

No sólo la economía islandesa no se derumbó con la solución de la crisis a partir del impago de la deuda sino que cerrará el 2011 con un crecimiento del 2,1% que será del 1,5% en 2012, cifra que triplica la de los países de la zona euro.

Gran parte de ese crecimiento se basa en incrementos productivos, principalmente en el turismo y la industria pesquera. Ello contrasta con el cuadro que exhiben otras economías europeas, estancados o en declive.

Islandia demostró que con la recuperación de su soberanía han venido aparejadas la justicia y la dignidad.

Políticos y banqueros corruptos han sido sometidos a juicios. Y, como reafirmación de su independencia, Islandia se convirtió en el pasado otoño en el primer país europeo en reconocer a Palestina como nación independiente, algo que ningún país sometido al yugo de la banca internacional capitalista ha podido hacer.

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continued from page 16

ratio is 1,050 boys born to 1,000 girls, but since 2005 there was an 18 percent drop in male births, to 850 boys born to 1,000 girls. This is an indicator of genetic damage that affects boys more than girls, similar to the sex-ratio found in Hiroshima after the atomic bomb was dropped.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Dr. Samira Alani, a paediatric specialist at Fallujah General Hospital, reported that between October 2009 and January 2012, she had personally logged almost 700 cases of birth defects. Not even medical terms can describe some of the conditions and most die within 20-30 minutes of being born. Scanning some of the cases coming out of Fallujah's hospitals brings up images of babies with multiple tumours, babies with their digestive system outside their body and a baby born with two heads - images that must be even harder to look at for all the expecting parents in Fallujah who don't know if their child will survive their first day.

In adults, the researchers also found a 38-fold increase in leukemia, a ten-fold increase in breast cancer, and significant increases in lymphoma and brain tumours.

Suspiciously, the findings conducted by more of Dr. Busby's research indicate, not the presence of depleted uranium, but slightly enriched uranium—most likely the product of a new secretive weapon that the US military experimented with on the people of Fallujah. Dr. Busby is currently conducting more research in to the devastating effects of US weapons on Fallujah and the likelihood of newer, more destructive radioactive weapons.

NO CHOICE BUT TO LEAVE!

The bloodbath that the US military created in Iraq follows a common path taken by the US government in that country. The US has no good record in Iraq. It can never repay the Iraqi people for the devastation of the first Gulf war, nor for the 13 years of crippling sanctions it imposed through the United Nations. No amount of reconstruction can repair the damage they inflicted through the March 2003 invasion and resulting occupation.

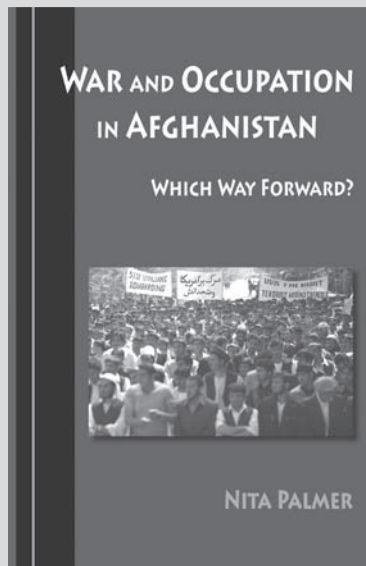
While Fallujah is a strong case study on the impacts of the US war drive in Iraq, it is not alone. Baghdad, Al Basrah, Mosul, Kirkuk - the list goes on. No area of that country was left untouched by the destructive force of US imperialism. Depleted uranium, and now the findings of other

forms of uranium, has seeped into the soil, air and water of that great land. With a half-life longer than the earth's existence, this radioactive element will now always be a part of Iraq.

While Barack Obama proclaims that US troops have left Iraq, he cannot hide the fact that they left behind at least 1,500 soldiers, the largest military embassy in the world with a staff of 15,000 people, and at least 15,000 mercenary contractors from the former Blackwater clique. Let's not forget the unmentionable secret military bases throughout the country. The US never left Iraq; its presence was only reduced and they maintain the capacity to re-intervene if the new Iraqi government and military can't do the job for them.

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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The US has no choice but to leave Iraq completely and unconditionally. It must do this not because it is right thing to do, but also because the proud and resilient people of Iraq will force them out, just as they have been working towards ever since the first bombs dropped on their country. The collective voice of people all over the world needs to echo their demands, and the future generations of Iraqis who have yet to be born should inherit a land that can rival its rich history...free from foreign domination.

continued from page 28

sites, is one of those issues that she is doing nothing about but twiddling her thumbs and hoping that the whole matter will simply disappear.

FTT: What are the prospects for the Musqueam and supporters in struggling over this issue?

Chief Phillip: Well, the Musqueam have had a very calculated and measured approach towards negotiating a resolution. They have certainly been innovative and have offered to engage in negotiations vis-a-vis a land swap. They have offered solutions to this situation and yet they require the full active participation of the province for these negotiations to have a successful conclusion. And therein lies the problem with the Clark government simply refusing to engage the issue and engaging in a lot of public statements that are completely misleading the general public - statements coming out of the provincial government to the effect that there is progress being made and that there is an effort being made to work towards a solution. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are just simply refusing to engage the issue and tensions are escalating.

Just the other day, the Musqueam people led a march onto the Arthur Laing Bridge, completely shut it down, and really snarled traffic for the better part of the morning yesterday, which greatly interfered with traffic to the airport. We understand there were cancellations of flights and certainly delayed flights. These types of activities will continue. It is clearly a human rights issue that the province of British Columbia is refusing to take responsibility for and political activities are obviously escalating with respect to the growing frustrations attached to this issue.

FTT: Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us.

Chief Phillip: Thank you.

that this October 7th will be a victory of the Venezuelan people's unconditional support for President Chávez.

FTT: Where does ALBA stand today, seven years after its founding, and what is the impact it has had on other Latin American countries other than ALBA member countries? Is there any prospect of new members?

Vanegas: ALBA is the Big Homeland; it is the dream of our liberators - Miranda, Bolívar, Martí, Petion, among others - coming true. It was in 2001 at the Summit of Heads of State, when President Chávez noted the need for a new model of integration between the countries - a model that would substitute the nefarious imperialist and capitalist economic model known as ALCA - a new way of cooperation, integration and respect for self-determination and sovereignty of peoples. The first summit convened in December 2004. This meeting of peoples and governments of Latin America and the Caribbean forms a great nation - a great nation.

In relation to the impact on other Latin American countries, it is clearly an economic model of cooperation, inclusiveness and solidarity - results that

are clear for the people. It is the belief that in unity lies strength. In relation to receiving new members, we believe that, based on self-determination of peoples, each nation has the sovereign right to choose its political model. Under the respect for sovereignty and self-determination, the common anti-imperialist struggle is that we march to the Big Homeland. Therefore the ideal is that there will be new members in the future.

FTT: What was the response of the Venezuelan government to the exclusion of Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS), which was a result of the U.S. administration's insistence and pressure in the recent general meeting in Colombia. Can we expect Cuba will be excluded again from the next OAS meeting?

Vanegas: The Venezuelan government has steadfastly maintained its conviction and absolute rejection of the exclusion of Cuba from the Summit of the Americas. This

is why, at the recently held meeting in Cartagena, our Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro announced the position of the countries grouped under the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA), which emphasized and decided unanimously to not attend any Summit of the Americas if Cuba is still excluded. ALBA also reaffirmed its rejection of the inhuman and criminal blockade of Cuba by Washington since 1962 to pressure and end the Cuban revolutionary effort.

FTT: What is the significance and impact of the new Venezuelan Labour Law that President Chávez officially signed on May 1st, International Workers Day?

Vanegas: As for the newly enacted Labor Law, it was a debt to our workers. For our revolutionary government that guards labor demands, passing a law like this shows our commitment to the working class. It rescued the benefits of workers and represents an escalation of labor rights. Now social security is extended, is one of the best in the world and first in Latin America.

FTT: Thank you very much, Merli, for the interview and for your time.

Vanegas: Thanks to Fire This Time for giving me this space.



April 30, 2012 - Hugo Chávez holds newly signed labour law

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la Primera Cumbre, este encuentro de los pueblos y gobiernos de la América Latina Caribeña conforma una Gran Patria, una Gran Nación.

En relación a su impacto en otros países latinoamericanos, es indudable como modelo económico de cooperación, integrador y solidario, los resultados están a la vista de los pueblos. Es la máxima de que en la unión esta la fuerza y con relación a recibir nuevos miembros, somos de la opinión que con base a la autodeterminación de los pueblos, cada nación tiene el derecho soberano de elegir su modelo político. Bajo el respeto a la soberanía, a la autodeterminación, a la lucha común antiimperialista, es que marchamos hacia la Patria Grande, por ende lo ideal que haya nuevos países miembros.

FTT: ¿Cuál fue la respuesta del gobierno venezolano a la exclusión de Cuba de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), que fue como resultado

de la insistencia de la administración de EE.UU. y la presión en la reciente reunión general en Colombia? ¿Podemos esperar que Cuba seguirá estando excluida de la próxima reunión de la OEA?

Vanegas: El Gobierno Venezolano ha mantenido firmemente su condena y rechazo absoluto a la exclusión de Cuba de las Cumbre de las Américas, es por ello que en la recién celebrada en Cartagena, nuestro Canciller Nicolás Maduro dio a conocer la posición de los países agrupados bajo la Alianza Bolivariana para los pueblos de nuestra América (ALBA), en la cual enfatizaron y decidieron de forma unánime que no asistirán más a ninguna Cumbre de las Américas si Cuba sigue siendo excluida. Igualmente ratificaron su rechazo al bloqueo inhumano y criminal de Washington desde 1962 con el fin de presionar y acabar con la digna Revolución cubana.

FTT: ¿Cuál es la importancia y el impacto de la Ley del Trabajo venezolana nueva que el presidente Chávez firmó oficialmente el 1 de mayo, Día Internacional del Trabajador?

Vanegas: En cuanto a la recién promulgada Ley Orgánica del Trabajo, era una deuda con nuestros trabajadores y trabajadoras. Para nuestro gobierno revolucionario protector de las reivindicaciones laborales, el aprobar una ley como esta, revela nuestro compromiso con la clase obrera. En ella se rescatan los beneficios de los trabajadores en cumplimiento de la progresividad de los derechos laborales, se extiende la seguridad social, está a la vanguardia de una de las mejores del mundo y la primera en Latinoamérica.

FTT: Muchas gracias Merli por la entrevista y gracias por tu tiempo.

Vanegas: Gracias a Fire This Time por el espacio.

BRADLEY MANNING SOLDIER OF HUMANITY



By Alison Bodine

"What I did was show some truth to the working man

What I did was blow the whistle and the games began

Tell the truth and it will set you free

That's what they taught me as a child

*But I can't be silent after all I've seen and done
24 bright light I'm almost gone, almost gone"*

- from "Almost Gone (Ballad Of Bradley Manning)," a song by Graham Nash and Jaymond.

On May 15th peace-loving people in Vancouver listened to the above song as they gathered at Joe's Cafe for an event about accused Wikileaks Whistleblower Bradley Manning. The public forum featured speakers, multi-media, and discussion focused on understanding the significance of Bradley Manning's case and on international support for his immediate freedom. This forum was the second organized in Vancouver since the launching of the Free Bradley Manning Campaign – Vancouver.

From June 6th - 8th Bradley Manning faced a pre-trial hearing, in which the brutality and injustice of the US military courts was once again exposed as all charges against him were upheld. These charges include "aiding the enemy," which carries with it the possibility that Bradley Manning could spend the rest of his life behind prison walls. The Mobilization Against

Justice for Bradley Manning! Free Bradley Manning Now!

Report from Mobilization Against War and Occupation
and the Free Bradley Manning Campaign – Vancouver

War and Occupation (MAWO) forum was organized to discuss these latest developments in his case, but also to discuss the role of whistleblowers in defending the democratic rights of people all over the world, and why people in Canada should defend Bradley Manning.

Alison Bodine, co-chair of MAWO, opened the forum. She talked about the fundamental democratic rights that came under attack when Bradley Manning was arrested over two years ago. While the US and Canadian governments claim that they are following their own rules, and fighting for human rights and democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, Alison questioned how what Bradley Manning did in exposing the true could even be considered a crime. "All he did was spread the truth, and isn't this a fundamental right? Don't the governments of Canada and the US claim to represent the people? Isn't it then our right to hold those governments to what they say and do?"

Following Alison, Aaron Mercredi, Indigenous activist and member of editorial board of Fire This Time Newspaper, spoke about Bradley Manning and his role and contributions to the world-wide antiwar movement. Aaron examined the history of whistleblowers -- including Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon Papers that exposed the US governments lies about the Vietnam War. The information that was released by Daniel Ellsberg contributed to a growing mass-consciousness and helped to fuel the US antiwar movement that, together with the Vietnamese resistance, ended the Vietnam war. Aaron also outlined some of the basic facts about the case of Bradley Manning, including his horrific treatment in a US military prison where he was in solitary confinement for ten months, during which he was denied many of his basic rights as a prisoner and sometimes forced to be completely naked.

This educational forum and discussion was the fifth action in defence of Bradley Manning organized by MAWO and the Free Bradley Manning Campaign – Vancouver. Since the launching of the campaign in April there have been two petition campaign stops, one emergency rally (the 2nd

emergency rally is scheduled for June 7th -- the day that this paper goes to print) and two public forums. During these events over 500 signatures from peace-loving people here in Vancouver, demanding freedom for Bradley Manning, have been collected.

When Bradley Manning released over 700,000 pages of documents, the Afghan War Diary and Iraq War Logs exposing the true face of a brutal, destructive and inhuman wars and occupations carried out by the US government, he did so as a "Soldier for Humanity." Bradley Manning is a hero who should be celebrated, not a criminal who should be put away in prison. When he made the decision to expose the US government, Bradley Manning stood up for oppressed people all over the world, including for all of us in Canada. The government of Canada was and remains complicit in the crimes revealed in the released documents; it is time for people in Canada to defend Bradley Manning and, in doing so, build a stronger and more united antiwar movement in Canada.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) will be out on the streets of Vancouver rallying, passing out information and collection petition signatures for Bradley Manning until he is free. We are joining together with the Bradley Manning Support Network in the US and groups from England to Australia demonstrating for his freedom at every turning point in his case. Pre-trial hearings, which determine what evidence and arguments will be allowed in court, are scheduled to continue once a month through the summer, and up until his trial is set to begin on September 21st. It is crucial that people in Canada let the US government know that "all eyes are on them" as Bradley's trial begins, and that we join together to demand his freedom.

For more information on the Free Bradley Manning Campaign – Vancouver, including campaign brochures and buttons visit: <http://www.mawovancouver.org/> For more updates on the case of Bradley Manning visit: <http://www.bradleymanning.org/>

Free Bradley Manning Now! Justice for Bradley Manning!

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This summer for the 23rd time, the Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan to Cuba will challenge the United States' government's economic and travel blockade on Cuba, that has been imposed by the U.S. government on the Cuban people for over 50 years. The Caravan will travel through up to 140 cities in the U.S. and Canada, raising awareness about the U.S. blockade and gathering humanitarian aid to take to Cuba. After two weeks of traveling through the U.S. there is a blockade-busting border crossing into Mexico when participants directly break U.S. law in an act of civil disobedience by taking humanitarian aid that is destined for Cuba across the border into Mexico. Participants will then

travel through Mexico and depart for nine days in Cuba, participating in a variety of educational and cultural events.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Pastors for Peace Caravans to Cuba. Over the past 20 years thousands of participants and over 30000 tons of humanitarian aid have been brought to Cuba, building a 'people-to-people' foreign policy based on mutual respect, solidarity and friendship between the people of the U.S. and Cuba.

This Caravan also commemorates Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr., the founding director of Pastors for Peace, who died peacefully in September 2010.

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